

Defining Youth-Vitality Through Aesthetics: Cognitive Basis for Digitalized Chinese-Style Hairstyle Aesthetics and International Civilization Mutual Learning

Ping Chen¹, Qiang Zhu², Yang Yue³

¹Oriental Unicorn Beauty Industry Group, Shanghai 201108, China

²Shanghai Urban Construction Vocational College, Oriental Unicorn Beauty Industry Group, Shanghai 201108, China

³Shanghai Age of Cloud Valley Technology Co., Ltd., Shanghai 201111, China

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of globalization, the urban cultural-tourism economy, and the dynamic upgrade & structural optimization of commercial service industries, the traditional hairdressing industry presents prominent problems, including fragmented service ontology, sluggish operational efficiency, and lagging innovative approaches for proactively serving urban renewal and coordinating localized industries. Taking digitalization as the core integrating element, centering on key links such as hairdressing culture, fashion trends, technological content, and spiritual wellbeing, and realizing resonance between Chinese-style aesthetics and modern international civilization, the integrated model of “digitalization + top-tier aesthetics + comprehensive health” has become the mainstream direction for the transformation and development of China’s hairdressing industry. From the cross-cultural research perspective, combined with theoretical reflection and practical experience accumulated in China’s hairdressing industry for years, this paper selects industry and art as research dimensions and places emphasis on fundamentality, integration, and pioneering nature. Drawing on two fundamental frameworks, namely TONQUY’s integrated cutting theory, which is well-recognized by global authoritative hairdressing experts, and the American Milady standard curriculum system, this paper originally puts forward the “Symbiosis and Harmony Theory of Digitalized Chinese-Style Hairstyle Aesthetics and International Civilization Mutual Learning,” and constructs a top-tier aesthetic paradigm integrating traditional culture and fashion trends, re-interpreting youth-vitality from the aesthetic perspective. The research outcomes can not only provide practical references and core practical guidelines for the transformation, upgrading, and high-quality development of the hairdressing industry, but also further improve the mainstream social values of integrity-oriented service and winning customers with craftsmanship. Adhering to the philosophy of inheritance through integrity and integrated innovative development, this paper addresses practical bottlenecks restricting the development of new-quality productive forces in the hairdressing industry, provides original academic support, fills domestic research gaps in core theoretical thinking as well as the integration of digital hairdressing art and production innovation, and carries milestone significance for the development of the global hairdressing industry.

Keywords: Digitalization; Methodology; Chinese-style aesthetics; Fashion trend; Beauty economy; Art production;

1. Introduction

China has now entered a historical opportunity period for the development of new-quality productive forces. With the accelerated evolution of urban civilization, people, especially young generations, have undergone profound changes in their pursuit of beauty, shifting from “passive enjoyment” to “active pursuit of change”. They actively look for reference works matching their personalized demands through ever-changing online platforms. Boasting a 4 000-year-long hairdressing history and culture, the craft of hair styling serves as an important carrier for inheriting traditional culture. Sino-foreign hairdressing cultural exchanges, the integration of antiquity and modernity, as well as fashion trends have boosted the sound and rapid growth of China’s fashion industry, and converting consumption traffic into consumption increment has become a widely-recognized consensus.

Nevertheless, despite the huge market potential of domestic hairdressing consumption retail, multiple historical challenges have emerged. Major barriers and pain points in the gradual development of the industry are summarized as follows. In 2010, China joined the WorldSkills Competition and won Asia’s first gold medal in the history of the competition. However, the hairdressing event, known as the “dream team” event of the WorldSkills Competition, to some extent failed to translate competition achievements gained on international arenas into phenomenal commercial products popular among mass-market and online-influencer circles. There are more than 20 million professional hairdressing practitioners nationwide, yet a systematic, strategic, and leading integration mechanism is absent. Hairstylists tend to overemphasize technical skills while undervaluing cultural connotation. “Chinese-style” hairstyle designs with national-cultural connotations lack distinct features, with relatively weak cultural communication and social influence. The overall political and cultural ecosystem of the beauty industry is fragile. Intensified involution-driven competition leads to poor coordination between innovative initiatives and cultural literacy. Top-level design integrating the hairdressing industry into full-cycle-of-life development is obviously insufficient. Research on combining mature European models with China’s local national conditions is inadequate.

By sorting out key domestic and foreign literature on hairdressing specialty, culture and fashion, and accumulating observations from events including Intercoiffure Mondiale (ICD), Asian Hairdressers Awards (AHA) and Asian Beauty Industry Vocational Skills Competition, this paper finds that to improve the depth of industry-education integration and commercial-service-model construction, it is necessary to break through the logical point of in-depth connection between Internet-based digital hairdressing and client terminals. There still lacks a full-loop mechanism integrating concepts, planning, and action units that correspond to market responses, blend culture and art, and match physical and mental health. It has become a priority for theoretical breakthroughs and bears strategic significance and far-reaching implications.

2. Establishing cultural subjectivity for the new era

Chinese-style aesthetics and national-trend culture symbolize the iterative upgrading of the fashion industry.

This emerging consumption fashion takes fashion communication as its external representation, with cultural-and-creative empowerment for traditional industries as its core connotation, and its root lies in rising cultural self-awareness brought by enhanced comprehensive national strength^[1-2]. The industrialization of fashion is accompanied by the global flow of symbols and meanings. In a sense, it calls for cultural self-awareness and integration of Chinese and foreign innovative cultures^[3-4]. Possessing an independent and complete aesthetic system, Chinese-style hairstyle aesthetics is not a supplement to Western aesthetics. It is deeply rooted in Chinese aesthetic philosophies, including the unity of humans and nature and the interplay of virtuality and reality.

From ancient coiled buns, tied-up hair, braids, and traditional coiffures to modern-improved hairstyles, nowadays more and more consumers favor fashion elements and attach importance to the core foundations such as demeanor, makeup, color, workplace requirements, and the symbiotic relationship between human beings and hairstyles. People should strengthen cultural training on hairstyle-trend spirits and foster the essence and strength of Chinese culture. The modern expression of traditional culture refreshes public aesthetics and demonstrates the unique charm of Chinese culture. Standing at the new-development stage, people need to decode the genes of traditional culture, promote the creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional Chinese culture, and activate cultural confidence^[4].

European and American hairstyles focus on structure, cutting, light-and-shadow contours, and relaxed texture. By means of digital archiving, domestic hairstyles convert the abstract “Oriental artistic conception” into observable, visible, concise, vivid, and textural artistic styling, forming two parallel logical lines of aesthetics.

Online communities realize virtual aggregation relying on interest connection and cultural identity, and generate value through the transformation of cultural capital. Business forms have gradually shifted from traditional linear value chains to network-based ecological systems. Since the 1990s, the interplay of globalization waves, industrial regulation adjustments, social-structure evolution, and technological innovation has jointly driven unprecedented profound transformation and development in mass media and various global industries^[5-6]. In the hairdressing industry, hairdressers transforming into Internet-oriented practitioners carries landmark significance for leading digital transformation. Through data comparison and computing infrastructure, they analyze client demands, produce high-quality avant-garde hairstyle samples and short-video works, acquire private-domain customers by building personal IPs, and carry out precise exposure and promotion. Driven by social psychology, consumers form a “grass-planting” (aspirational recommendation) mentality. Public praise generated by “grass-planting” exerts influence on real consumption, further reaching and matching middle-to-high-end customers and stimulating market consumption traffic^[7]. Meanwhile, distinctive and friendly new cultural-consumption scenarios shall be created to enhance plural-cultural connotations and humanistic value. Hair salons evolve into brand-new lifestyles for the public, deeply boosting the leap-forward development of urban fashion industries.

3. Breaking down binary opposition

The core essence of civilization mutual learning lies in absorbing mutual strengths and promoting the integration of underlying logics of different aesthetic cultures. International hairstyling boasts solid technical foundations in terms of structural techniques and color systems, and accumulates diverse cultural heritage. Domestic practices focus on digital styling tools and contemporary human-body aesthetics.

Western hairstylists stress fluffy texture for daily maintenance; Japanese-Korean-Asian styles feature a neat appearance, glossy hair, and sharp, clear lines, which impose a heavy time cost on maintenance for some urban white-collar groups. Adopting dialectical thinking, people insist on mutual reference and mutual empowerment, and stick to the unique Oriental aesthetic standards of Chinese-style aesthetics represented by blank-leaving conception, rhythm, implicitness, temperament, and the harmony between human and hairstyle, to reflect individual independence, Chinese elements, national-trend styles, and ethnic customs in real-life scenarios. Digitalization shall be fully utilized to build two-way comparative databases for quantifying styling features, linear language, and spatial relations of the two aesthetic schools, distinguishing techniques for reference and irreplaceable aesthetic core connotations.

4. Deconstructing contemporary fashion expression

As a key theory for the operation of social systems, fashion has developed diverse research perspectives and concepts alongside cultural studies^[8]. Fashion communication gains driving force from constant conflicts and reconciliation between individuals and social groups, manifesting both individual personality and social guidance^[9]. Traditional Chinese-style hairstyle aesthetics requires the support of modern interpretive space to cater to current-generation consumers and respond to aesthetic tastes, value recognition, and cultural-emotional identity of Generation-Z youth. People should inherit the styling-art styles of outstanding foreign hairstylists and promote the creation of contemporary new-style hairstyle aesthetics. Neither blind adherence to antique styles nor total Westernization is acceptable. Supported by digital culture, virtual hairstyle trial-on, AI styling simulation and human-body aesthetic surveys, and giving full play to the visual-window effect of hairstyles worn by online celebrities and stars, people should study modern Chinese-style hairstyles accepted by young people. The creation and communication of new fashion has shifted from displaying class status to expressing individual personality^[10]. By absorbing contemporary expressive techniques of the global hairdressing circle, Chinese-style aesthetics can break free from the confinement of “ancient-costume retro styles,” blend into daily fashion trends, and realize the youthful expression of traditional aesthetics plus national-trend temperament featuring wellness-oriented positive youth vitality, digitalization, cultural power and accessibility, so as to achieve seamless connection between Chinese-style aesthetics and international civilization mutual learning.

5. Equal dialogue and two-way driving

Hairstyle is a civilization carrier with rich real-life implications. It is not merely an irreplaceable physical necessity for human beings, but also carries national aesthetics, etiquette, and lifestyles, and represents cultural images and era-oriented value orientations of regional civilizations and ethnic groups.

The Chinese Government advocates building a community with a shared future for mankind, which serves as a vital fulcrum for putting forward the Global Civilization Initiative. Mutual learning among civilizations is essentially two-way circulation instead of one-way learning. People advocate making the past serve the present and foreign things serve China, discarding the old and bringing forth the new, so as to nourish traditional Chinese culture close to real life. The core idea of communication is not to eliminate all differences, but to build equal dialogue platforms and provide opportunities for objective review of domestic ideas by the international community. Through collision, integration, and mutual learning of diverse

civilizations, such ideas will eventually burst with vigorous vitality, guiding human progress ^[11]. In recent years, high-frequency domestic-and-foreign hairdressing expositions, professional forums, Shanghai Fashion Week and Milan Fashion Week have formed shared perceptions and codes of conduct for the innovative development of the hairdressing industry. This proves that while continuously absorbing international advanced technical forms, China exports Chinese linear aesthetics, artistic conception aesthetics, human-oriented concepts and innovative achievements to global peers, offering new ideas, new schemes and new driving forces for the development of international hairstyle trends. Therefore, the “going-global” strategy of Chinese hairdressing art, winning recognition from international peers and influencing the shift of world hairdressing from “rigid necessity” to “flexible pursuit,” itself represents further understanding of traditional Chinese culture.

6. Innovation and transformation of unique aesthetic values

The hairdressing culture within Chinese-style aesthetics boasts rich connotations. It is more than aesthetic appearance-oriented behavior and is directly related to scalp physiology and human physical health, and further extends to mental-spiritual conditions. It can be divided into two major dimensions: physical health and spiritual wellbeing.

In daily client services, there is an unavoidable “fear-of-dyeing” phenomenon concerning the relationship between scalp maintenance and hair dyeing or perming. Improper hairdressing constantly damages scalp surface barriers and consumes physical energy. To clarify the relationship between scalp maintenance and dyeing and perming, scientific methods shall be adopted to explore comprehensive evaluation parameters including hair-strand density, dye-sensitive hair quality, absorption rate, practicality, and public praise. Efforts shall be made to expand popular-science coverage, achieve major breakthroughs in hair-dyeing materials, perming tools, operating skills, and key technical points, so as to realize more rigorous standards, more scientific methodologies, and more advanced approaches. Meanwhile, people should accelerate the research-and-development of bottleneck-breaking core technologies, and promote the planning and implementation of a full-chain green-ecological innovation system covering cutting-edge-technology patent creation, concept verification, module maturation, new-product testing, and cultural infiltration.

Hairdressing is closely associated with people’s emotional well-being and self-identity, and self-image perception influences personal moods. First of all, as the saying goes, “hair-related issues rank among top-priority concerns.” Appropriate and comfortable hairstyles improve self-acceptance and self-confidence, cultivate sentiment, and ease physical-mental pressure. Long-term messy hairstyles and image anxiety may easily trigger negative emotions. Therefore, hair-care itself counts as an important way of self-conduct and cherishing life. Secondly, people should strengthen the construction of scientific-and-technological-innovation systems, and take the lead in researching and developing cutting-edge benchmark products represented by wolf-cut styling and low-damage light-hair-dyeing crafts, to lead industry fashion trends and achieve practical effects including hair-strand repair and improvement of scalp-and-hair health. Finally, the diversity and innovation of the hairdressing industry help enhance the cultural soft power of international-oriented cities and cover the whole-life cycle of citizens. By combining extracellular-matrix-related technologies with arts, activating the essence of traditional culture, and integrating profound cultural philosophies into immersive consumption scenarios, people can build a brand-new industrial highland featuring deep integration of Oriental aesthetics and life sciences.

7. Conclusion

Globalization, market economy, and technological iteration boost the spread of fashion, giving rise to changes in urban public forms and public perceptions. Fashion has deeply blended into daily life, reshaping production-sales modes as well as fashion-communication and consumption systems, and endowing individuals and groups with unique external-image characteristics ^[12]. Human understanding of fashion taste and styles features both innate emotional nature and acquired learnability, as well as trans-temporal nature and social-constructed nature ^[13]. Increasingly mediatized fashion, as a holistic social fact, can connect various social fields ^[14]. The iterative upgrading of urban commercial-service industries drives the beauty industry to evolve from pure craft-based services into a brand-new development stage featuring multi-dimensional integration of culture, digitalization, and life-health ^[15]. Hairstyle is not merely a symbol of individual external image, but also a life-oriented carrier inheriting national-aesthetic memories and facilitating civilization exchange and mutual learning. Based on the 4 000-year-old Chinese cultural heritage and cutting-edge developments of the hairdressing industry, the “Symbiosis and Harmony Theory of Digitalized Chinese-Style Hairstyle Aesthetics and International Civilization Mutual Learning” proposed in this paper leverages AI empowerment, anchors the origin of Chinese-aesthetic hairstyle culture, breaks away from one-way imitation of foreign styles, establishes cultural subjectivity, and explores a multi-dimensional cognitive framework covering contemporary fashion expression of Chinese-style aesthetics, equal-dialogue two-way driving, as well as innovation and transformation of aesthetic values. It promotes innovative and inclusive development of China’s hairdressing industry, and manifests the unique value connotation, era responsibility, and emotional resonance of Chinese culture.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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