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Analysis of Trends in Modern Hanfu Styles from a Specific Brand Perspective — An Exploration Based on the Diffusion of Innovations Theory

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Article

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ABSTRACT

Based on the Diffusion of Innovations theory, this study explores the mechanism behind the popularity of modern Hanfu, with a focus on the roles of key attributes such as relative advantage and compatibility. Using content analysis, the study quantitatively examines mainstream Hanfu styles in the market from the Autumn/Winter 2021 season to the Spring/Summer 2024 season. Additionally, semi-structured interviews provide deeper insights into the perspectives of consumers and designers. The findings reveal that different forms of Hanfu (e.g., Ming-style, Song-style, Tang-style) exhibit distinct market advantages across seasons, highlighting the seasonal relative advantages of Hanfu. Combining Hanfu styles and intricate design details aligns closely with modern consumer preferences, thereby driving its popularity. Furthermore, external factors such as television dramas, cultural events, and social media enhance the observability of Hanfu, further facilitating its market diffusion. This study suggests that Hanfu's popularity results from the combined influence of cultural revival, design innovation, market demand, and external promotion. Compatibility, as a key characteristic, significantly impacts the acceptance and popularity of Hanfu in the modern market. This research provides theoretical support for the design and innovation of modern Hanfu while offering a new perspective on the inheritance and development of traditional culture. By delving into the diffusion mechanism of Hanfu, this study contributes to the further dissemination and development of Hanfu culture.

KEYWORDS

modern Hanfu, diffusion of innovations theory, popularity mechanism

INTRODUCTION

With the global re-evaluation and renewed appreciation of traditional culture in recent years, Hanfu—an attire deeply embedded in Chinese heritage—has been experiencing a revival, emerging from the annals of history with renewed vitality [1,2]. As the traditional clothing of the Chinese nation, Hanfu not only encapsulates rich historical narratives and cultural significance but also serves as a bridge

connecting the past and present, showcasing the Chinese people's unique aesthetic principles and cultural confidence.

With changing times, Hanfu has transcended its traditional role as attire reserved for festivals and special occasions and has gradually integrated into contemporary daily life. This phenomenon is largely driven by modern designers and brands' continuous innovations in Hanfu design, who skillfully blend traditional elements with modern fashion trends. As a result, Hanfu retains its distinctive cultural essence while also gaining practicality and a contemporary sense of style. These design innovations have expanded the applicability of Hanfu across various settings, attracting a broader audience of modern consumers. However, the popularity of Hanfu in the modern market is not an overnight success; rather, it is a complex process influenced by multiple factors, warranting in-depth exploration. The Diffusion of Innovations Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding this phenomenon. This study examines the popularity mechanism of modern Hanfu styles through the lens of innovation diffusion. By conducting an in-depth analysis of recent Hanfu trends using content analysis and semi-structured interviews, this paper seeks to uncover the relationship between Hanfu's forms, style combinations, and design details, as well as their compatibility with modern consumer preferences. Through this research, we aspire to offer theoretical support for the design and innovation of modern Hanfu while also contributing to the preservation and development of traditional culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The History and Modern Development of Hanfu

Hanfu, as an important cultural heritage, has exhibited significant diversity throughout history, evolving alongside dynastic transitions [3,4]. Historians and fashion researchers have extensively studied its development, identifying distinct design characteristics across the Tang, Song, and Ming dynasties [5]. For instance, Hanfu from the Tang dynasty is renowned for its luxurious colours and intricate patterns, whereas the Song dynasty emphasised simplicity and practicality. Meanwhile, the Ming dynasty's Hanfu designs reflected a more rigorous and standardised aesthetic concept [6].

Modern Hanfu Design Innovation and Market Trends

With the global reevaluation and growing recognition of traditional cultures, Hanfu has not only regained widespread domestic popularity but has also attracted increasing attention on an international scale. Sociologists and cultural researchers have analysed multiple factors contributing to this phenomenon, including the rise of nationalism, the impact of globalisation, and the younger generation's exploration of personal and cultural identity [7]. These studies suggest that the revival of

Hanfu is not merely a transient fashion trend but rather a manifestation of profound socio-cultural movements.

In modern design, designers and brands consistently innovate Hanfu designs by integrating traditional elements with contemporary fashion trends, enabling their use for traditional festivals and ceremonies and daily wear. Studies indicate that such innovation and adaptability are key factors in attracting modern consumers [8]. For example, the "Chonghui Hantang" brand has optimised tailoring and material choices of traditional Hanfu to better align with modern wearing habits and aesthetic preferences, thereby enhancing its versatility [9].

In recent years, research on clothing style trends has further demonstrated that the popularity of traditional attire in the modern market primarily depends on integrating cultural heritage and innovative design. Modern Hanfu, while preserving its core silhouette and structure, has enhanced practicality and everyday adaptability through tailoring innovations, material advancements, and fusion with contemporary fashion [10]. The popularity of specific fashion items, such as the horse-face skirt (马面裙), exemplifies the product-driven fashion trend. Meanwhile, interdisciplinary collaborations and diversified fusion have emerged as key strategies for driving the expansion of the Hanfu market, enhancing its versatility across diverse contexts [11].

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Everett Rogers's Diffusion of Innovations Theory explores how new technologies, products, or ideas spread and are adopted within a social system. This theory identifies five key characteristics that influence the diffusion of innovation: Relative Advantage, Compatibility, Complexity, Trialability, and Observability.

Relative Advantage refers to the extent to which an innovation is superior to existing solutions and better meets user needs; the more apparent the advantage, the faster the diffusion. Compatibility refers to the degree to which an innovation aligns with existing culture, values, and needs; the higher the compatibility, the faster the diffusion. Complexity refers to the difficulty of using an innovation; the more complex it is, the slower the diffusion. Trialability refers to whether an innovation can be tested on a small scale to reduce the risk of adoption; the higher the trialability, the faster the diffusion. Observability refers to how easily the effects of an innovation can be perceived; the more observable and imitable it is, the faster the diffusion.

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory has been widely applied in various fields, including technological innovation, marketing, and social communication [12]. Research has shown that the successful diffusion of a product or idea often depends on its ability to meet user needs and the effectiveness of its dissemination channels (Rogers, 2003). In cultural transmission and the fashion industry, this theory

can also be used to analyse how traditional clothing regains popularity in modern society and influences consumer choices and market acceptance.

Current research primarily focuses on Hanfu cultural revival, innovative design, and consumer behaviour, but discussions on its diffusion mechanism remain relatively limited. Particularly within the Diffusion of Innovations Theory framework, studies on Relative Advantage, Compatibility, and Observability are still insufficient. Existing literature lacks data-driven trend analysis and the integration of interview data, making it difficult to systematically explain how modern Hanfu has transitioned from a niche culture to the mainstream market.

Therefore, based on the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, this study combines content analysis and interview data to fill this research gap and provide theoretical support for modern Hanfu design and cultural transmission.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs content analysis combined with semi-structured interviews to explore the popularity mechanism of Hanfu styles.

Content Analysis Method

The data for Content Analysis primarily comes from the online stores of the "Chonghui Hantang" and "Huazhaoji" brands. Approximately 600 Hanfu images cover six seasons from Autumn/Winter 2021 to Spring/Summer 2024. All images were screened to ensure their completeness and validity, focusing on the mainstream styles of these brands to more comprehensively reflect market trends.

Each Hanfu image was analysed for its key stylistic characteristics, including dynastic style (such as Tang-style, Song-style, Ming-style, etc.), collar type, sleeve type (such as large sleeves, wide sleeves, etc.), and skirt type (such as one-piece pleated skirt, horse-face skirt, etc.). The textual records were then encoded using letters and numbers. After encoding, Excel was used for statistical analysis. This study primarily employs frequency count and frequency analysis, calculating the occurrence frequency of different Hanfu elements and using data visualisation methods to intuitively display popularity trends and design innovations.

Interview Method

This study adopts a semi-structured interview method, conducting interviews with 12 participants, including 6 general Hanfu consumers and 6 Hanfu designers. To ensure data anonymity and facilitate analysis, participants were encoded sequentially according to the interview order (B01–B12). The interview questions were designed based on the diffusion of innovation theory, focusing on relative

advantage, compatibility, and observability to explore the key factors influencing Hanfu's popularity trends, as shown in Table 1.

All interview data were first transcribed into textual records and then organised to summarise the core viewpoints [13]. During the data processing stage, the researchers first read the interview transcripts, highlighted key content, and then performed coding to identify main themes, which were further integrated with quantitative data for comprehensive analysis [14]. Through this approach, the study ensures that interview data supplement and support the quantitative analysis, enhancing the rigour of research conclusions. This study strictly follows academic ethical guidelines, ensuring that all interview data remain anonymous and are used solely for academic research, without involving any privacy breaches.

Table 1. Interview outline and sources

Interview Questions	Source
1. Which Hanfu styles do you usually choose? Why?	(Li, 2019)
2. Which Hanfu styles do you find more attractive than modern clothing? Which styles do you think are less practical? Why?	(Fan, 2021)
3. On what occasions do you usually wear Hanfu? (e.g., daily wear, festivals, photography, social events, etc.)	
4. Do you mix Hanfu with modern clothing? For example, pairing a horse-face skirt with a T-shirt? Why?	(Wang, 2022)
5. How did you learn about modern Hanfu?	

In summary, this study conducts a quantitative analysis of Hanfu style popularity trends through content analysis and integrates semi-structured interviews to understand the perspectives of consumers and designers, thereby exploring the diffusion mechanism of modern Hanfu.

DATA ANALYSIS

Analysis of the Popularity Mechanism of Modern Hanfu Styles

From Fall/Winter 2021 to Spring/Summer 2024, the main popular dynastic Hanfu styles include Ming, Song, Tang, Jin, Hanfu-inspired, and wedding Hanfu. Analysing data from the past three years, it is evident that the popularity trends of different dynastic styles have undergone significant changes, as shown in Figure 1.

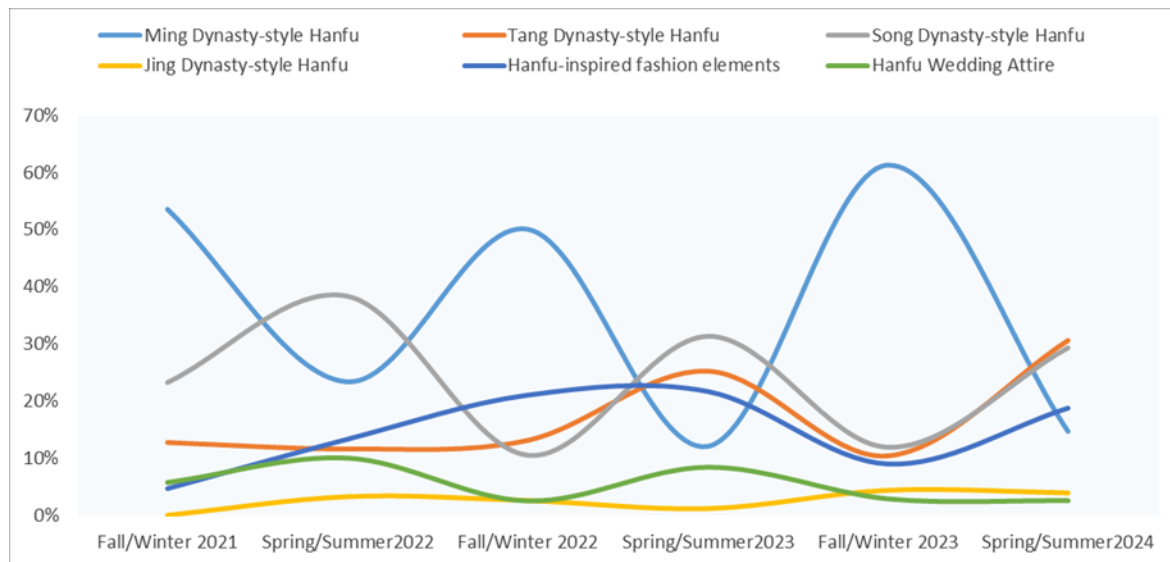


Figure 1. Trend Changes in Hanfu Dynastic Styles

The silhouette and structure of the Hanfu during the Ming dynasty demonstrated a clear seasonal popularity pattern over the past three years: a higher activity share in Fall/Winter, ranging between 50% and 60%. In contrast, during Spring/Summer, its activity share declined, reaching its lowest point in Spring/Summer 2023 at just 12.05%, ranking fourth and consistently below Song dynasty Hanfu throughout the season.

The silhouette and structure of Song Dynasty Hanfu also exhibited distinct seasonal variations. In the Spring/Summer of 2022, Song dynasty Hanfu was particularly active, achieving a share of 38.33%, the highest among Hanfu dynastic elements, highlighting its significant influence during this season. In Fall/Winter 2022, its activity share slightly decreased, ranking fourth. In other seasons, Song consistently ranked second. This sharp seasonal contrast between Song and Ming dynasty Hanfu demonstrates that Song dynasty Hanfu was more popular in Spring/Summer, while its share was relatively lower in Fall/Winter.

The silhouette and structure of the Tang Dynasty Hanfu maintained a relatively stable trend yet still experienced minor seasonal fluctuations. From Fall/Winter 2021 to Fall/Winter 2022, its activity share showed minimal changes, consistently ranking third after the Hanfu Song and Ming dynasties. However, from Spring/Summer 2023 to Spring/Summer 2024, its activity share began to fluctuate, notably increasing in Spring/Summer 2024 to 30.67%, surpassing the Song dynasty Hanfu and securing the top position.

Hanfu-inspired fashion elements gradually increased from Fall/Winter 2021 to Spring/Summer 2022, peaking in Fall/Winter 2022 with a share of 21.05%, ranking second. However, a declining trend emerged later, followed by a resurgence in Spring/Summer 2024. The market share of Hanfu wedding attire and Jin-style Hanfu has consistently remained low across all seasons, ranging between 2% and 6%, with minimal fluctuations.

In summary, the mainstream styles of modern Hanfu are Tang, Song, and Ming, while also exhibiting clear seasonal popularity trends. These three styles had long periods of historical popularity, offered various designs, and are well adapted to modern fashion needs. Interviewee B08 mentioned that the 2024 Spring Festival Gala showcased Tang-style, Song-style, and Ming-style Hanfu, which allowed her to experience the charm of Hanfu. This demonstrates that the display of Hanfu at large-scale national events enhances its visibility, attracting more audiences to these styles and subsequently driving market demand growth.

Data analysis indicates that Ming-style Hanfu is more popular in autumn and winter, whereas Song-style and Tang-style Hanfu are favoured in spring and summer, reflecting the differences in how each style adapts to modern fashion needs. Consumers consider seasonal factors and practicality when selecting Hanfu. As interviewee B02 stated: "I prefer Song-style Hanfu because its layering is relatively simple, making it suitable for daily wear in spring and summer." This suggests that Song-style Hanfu, with its simple design and lightweight fabrics, holds a seasonal advantage in warmer months. Social media and historical dramas may have influenced the rapid rise in popularity of Tang-style Hanfu in the Spring/Summer of 2024. According to interviewee B03, "I enjoy watching historical dramas, and last year, a Tang Dynasty costume drama had exceptionally well-executed costumes and styling, which made me pay more attention to Tang-style Hanfu." This phenomenon can be explained through the "Observability" characteristic of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. As a high-exposure medium, television dramas showcase the aesthetic appeal and cultural significance of Tang-style Hanfu, significantly increasing its recognition and acceptance among consumers. This high "Observability" lowers consumers' cognitive barriers toward new styles and demonstrates real-life application scenarios, further stimulating purchase intention and driving the market diffusion of Tang-style Hanfu.

Analysis of the Popularity Mechanism of Modern Hanfu Style Combinations and Pairing

In everyday Hanfu outfits for women, the main styles include an upper "Ao (袄, a lined jacket) " paired with a skirt, and an upper "Shan (衫, a single-layered garment for spring and autumn) " paired with a skirt. Ming dynasty Hanfu often incorporates additional garments like the "Bijia (比甲, a sleeveless jacket) ," "Yunjian (云肩, a decorative shoulder accessory) ," and cloaks. The primary skirt styles are the "Horse-face Skirt (马面裙) " (featuring pleated sides and a smooth central panel resembling a horse's face) and the one-piece pleated skirt, with the Horse-face Skirt being the more popular choice.

Song dynasty Hanfu typically features a strapped undergarment paired with a skirt, complemented by a shirt or "Beizi (褙子) " (a straight-collared jacket with side slits). The skirts commonly worn are

one-piece pleated skirts and the "Baidie Skirt (百迭裙)" (with pleats and an overlapped smooth front, resembling the Horse-face Skirt).

Tang dynasty everyday Hanfu combinations include short-sleeved and wide-sleeved shirts layered with long-sleeved shirts and half-sleeves adorned with a "Pibo (帔帛, a ceremonial scarf)." Popular skirt styles include the one-piece pleated skirt and the "Jiaoyu Skirt (交窠裙)" (a skirt made of trapezoidal panels of different colours), with variations like the 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 18-panel Jiaoyu Skirt, adjustable to waist-high or chest-high for different occasions.

Hanfu-inspired fashion elements primarily trend as various tops paired with Horse-face Skirts, including T-shirts, shirts, and cross-collared short jackets.

For men's daily Hanfu outfits, Tang and Song dynasty styles involve robes or shirts, while Ming dynasty styles mainly feature the "Tieli (贴里, a garment without side slits or draping)" and "Daopao (道袍, a straight-collared robe with side slits and a white or plain collar protector)," often paired with cloaks for warmth and protection.

According to the collected data (Figure 2), the variety of Hanfu silhouette and structure combinations has been rich over the past three years, with up to 16 combinations in Fall/Winter 2021, reducing to 11 in Spring/Summer 2022, and gradually decreasing to 8 by Spring/Summer 2024. Over the years, Hanfu has evolved to meet modern preferences with optimized style combinations and variations. The main types include Aoqun, Shanqun, and robes, often layered with Bijia, Banbi (半臂, half-sleeves), Yunjian, and cloaks. Other popular combinations include Beizi paired with straps and skirts, and Beizi paired with Shanqun.

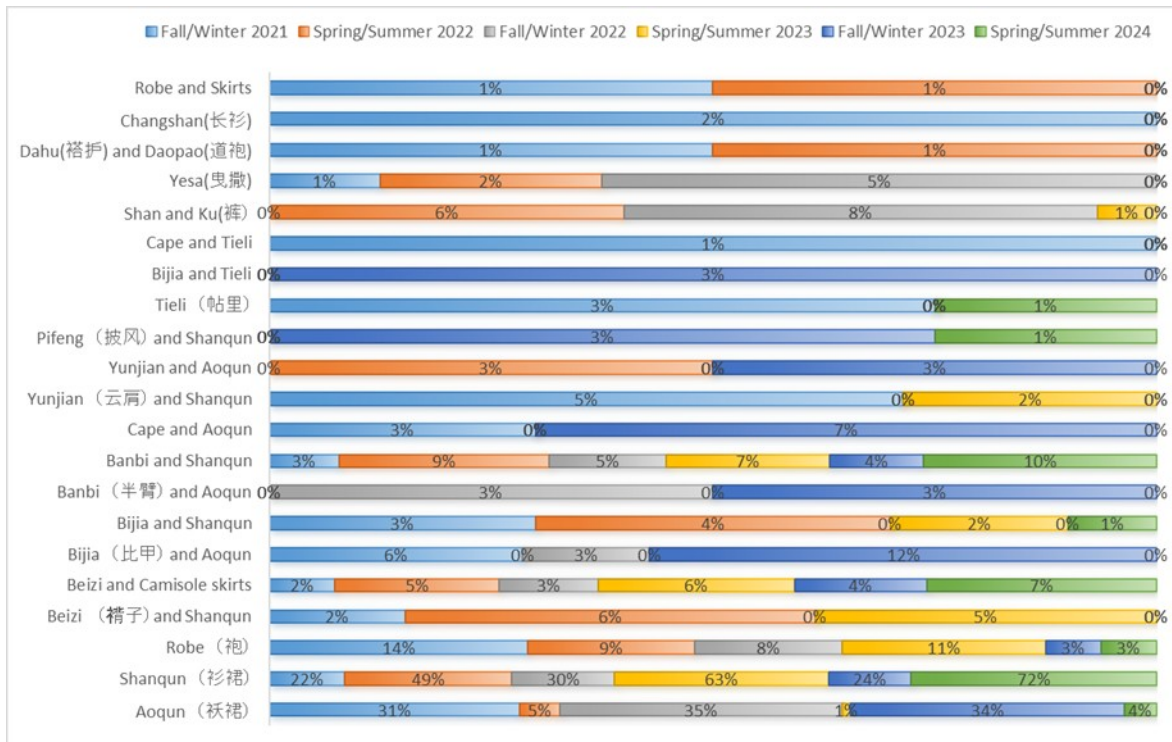


Figure 2. Proportions of Hanfu Combinations

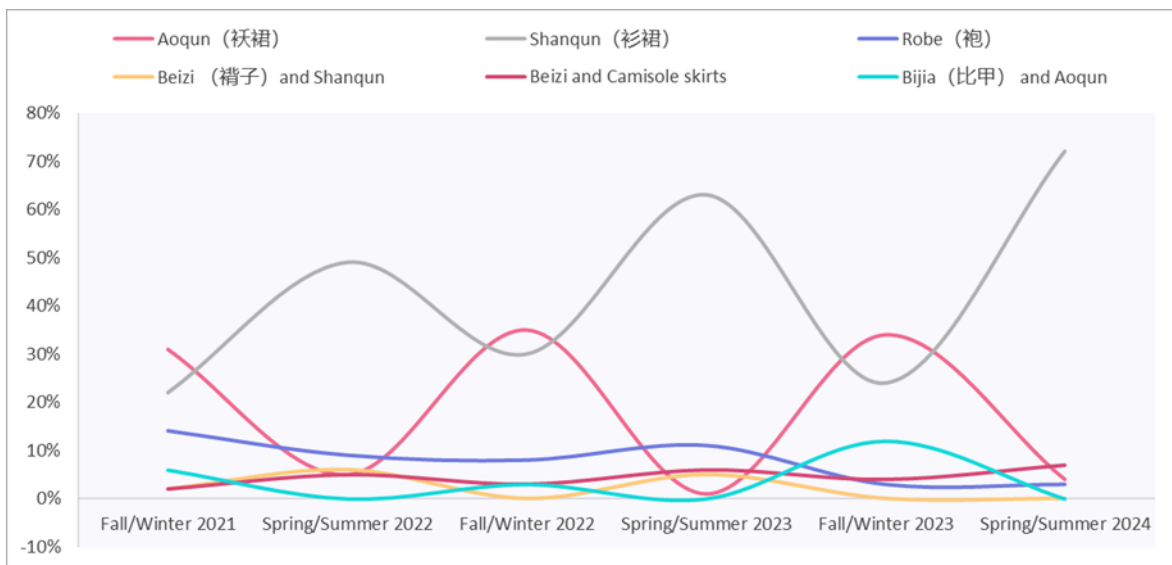


Figure 3. Trends in the Popularity of Shanqun, Aoqun, and Other Combinations

According to Figures 2 and 3, the Aoqun (袄裙) is notably prominent in the Fall/Winter seasons, with its proportions being 31% and 35% in the Fall/Winter of 2021 and 2022, respectively. However, it significantly drops to 5% and 1% during the Spring/Summer seasons. It rises again to 34% in the Fall/Winter of 2023 and drops to 4% in the Spring/Summer of 2024. It is evident that Aoqun is particularly prominent during the Fall/Winter seasons and exhibits significant fluctuations across different seasons.

Conversely, the Shanqun (衫裙) performs very strongly in the Spring/Summer seasons, with proportions of 49% and 63%, respectively, significantly higher than in other seasons. However, although its proportion declines in the Fall/Winter seasons, it remains high at 22% and 30%, respectively. In the Spring/Summer of 2024, the proportion of Shanqun even rises to 72%. It is evident that the Shanqun is very popular during the Spring/Summer seasons and remains a popular choice in the Fall/Winter seasons as well.

The style of robes occupied a 14% proportion in the Fall/Winter of 2021 and then stabilised around 3% in the Fall/Winter of 2022 and the Spring/Summer of 2023. This indicates that robes maintained a relatively stable popularity over these three years. The combination of Beizi paired with camisoles and skirts also maintained a relatively stable popularity over these three years, showing stable trend changes, with a prominent performance in the Spring/Summer seasons and a decline in the Fall/Winter seasons.

Although lower in proportion, the combinations of Banbi with Aoqun cloaks with Aoqun, and Bijia with Aoqun show relatively stable trend changes, mainly occurring in the Fall/Winter seasons. In these seasons, the "Banbi with Aoqun" combination has the highest proportions of 3%, 7%, and 10%, indicating a higher popularity of this combination during these seasons.

Yunjian with Shanqun occupied a 5% proportion in the Fall/Winter of 2021, then dropped to 0% in the Spring/Summer of 2022, and continued to maintain a low proportion in subsequent seasons, showing that the popularity of this combination is gradually declining. The combination of Yunjian with Aoqun had a 3% proportion in the Spring/Summer of 2022 and the Fall/Winter of 2023. The combination of Bijia with Shanqun had proportions of 3% and 2% in the Fall/Winter of 2021 and the Spring/Summer of 2023, respectively. The combination of Pifeng (披风) with Shanqun occupied a 3% proportion in the Fall/Winter of 2023, and a 1% proportion in the Spring/Summer of 2024; these combinations did not appear in other seasons, indicating a certain level of popularity for a brief period.

Yesa (曳撒), Dahu (褙护), and Daopao, as well as the combinations of robe skirts (袍裙), Tieli, Bijia, and Tieli, all show a low proportion in the sample data, around 1%, and only appear in certain seasons. Only Yesa rose to 5% in the Spring/Summer of 2023 but did not appear in subsequent seasons. Overall, these style combinations are not mainstream choices in the sample data, and their trend changes are unstable.

In recent years, among Hanfu styles, Shanqun and Aoqun have been the mainstream choices. They also exhibit seasonal popularity trends, with Aoqun being more favoured in autumn and winter, while the popularity of Shanqun in the spring and summer markets continues to rise. Interview data show that when choosing Hanfu styles, consumers often consider the occasion and seasonal adaptability. B05 stated, "I usually wear Hanfu for festivals or when visiting ancient towns for photos. In summer, I

prefer to buy lightweight Shanqun." The combination of Beizi with camisole innerwear and skirts has shown the same seasonal trend as Shanqun over the past three years, being mainly popular in spring and summer, while its market share declines in autumn and winter. This indicates that the combination of Shanqun with Beizi, camisole innerwear, and skirts has a relative advantage, as it is lightweight and breathable, making it particularly suitable for the spring and summer seasons, meeting modern consumers' demands for comfort and seasonal adaptability.

Types such as Banbi, Cloaks, and Bijia are often paired with Aoqun and are also popular in autumn and winter. Among them, the Banbi and Aoqun combination is highly accepted in autumn and winter, showing a relatively stable trend. Bijia and cloaks paired with Shanqun appear in some seasons but have a lower overall popularity, making them a short-term trend. B07 stated, "I would choose to wear Hanfu on holidays like New Year's Day. I like to pair Aoqun with a cloak, which is more suitable for winter."

The market recognition of robes remains relatively stable, with constant overall demand, but their popularity is lower than other styles. Traditional styles such as Yisan, Dahufu, Daoist robes, and Tieli mainly appear in specific seasons, with low market heat and failing to form a continuous trend. None of the interviewees mentioned that they liked these styles. These styles were traditionally men's clothing in ancient times and are generally quite loose-fitting. They do not align well with modern consumers' daily lifestyles or fashion preferences, leading to lower market acceptance.

Analysis of the Popularity Mechanism of Modern Hanfu Style Details

Analysis of Collar Type Trends

In Hanfu collar design, this includes Duijin (对襟) (where the fronts of the garment meet and fasten in the middle), Dajin (大襟) (also known as Xiejing, where the left front covers the right), and Jiaoling Youren (交领右衽) (where the fronts cross, with the left front covering the right, creating a 'Y' shape at the collar).

For the Shan category of Hanfu, the main collar types over these three years have included Zhiling Duijin (直领对襟), Jiaoling Youren Dajin (交领右衽大襟), Stand collar Duijin (立领对襟), and Round collar Duijin (圆领对襟). Other types appeared less frequently or were absent in some seasons.

Zhiling Duijin is the most mainstream collar type, maintaining a high proportion in most seasons. From Fall/Winter 2021 to Spring/Summer 2023, its share consistently remained above 50%, indicating a stable popularity trend. However, in Fall/Winter 2023, the proportion of Zhiling Duijin slightly decreased to 47%.

Jiaoling Youren has maintained a presence in these seasons, with a relatively low share, and is not a mainstream choice. It significantly increased to 29% in Fall/Winter 2022 but declined in subsequent seasons.

Stand collar Duijin peaked in Spring/Summer 2023, reaching a share of 32%, but remained relatively low in other seasons. Rectangular collar Duijin (方领对襟) and Stand collar Duijin only appeared in certain seasons with low proportions. Round neck Daijin (圆领大襟) and Round collar Duijin occurred infrequently in the data. Sweetheart collar Duijin (桃心领对襟) appeared in Spring/Summer 2024, accounting for 2%, and represents a relatively novel collar type. Turn-down collar with the buttoned placket (翻领搭门襟) and Round collar with the buttoned placket (圆领搭门襟) also appeared in the data but with relatively low shares, as shown in Figure 4.

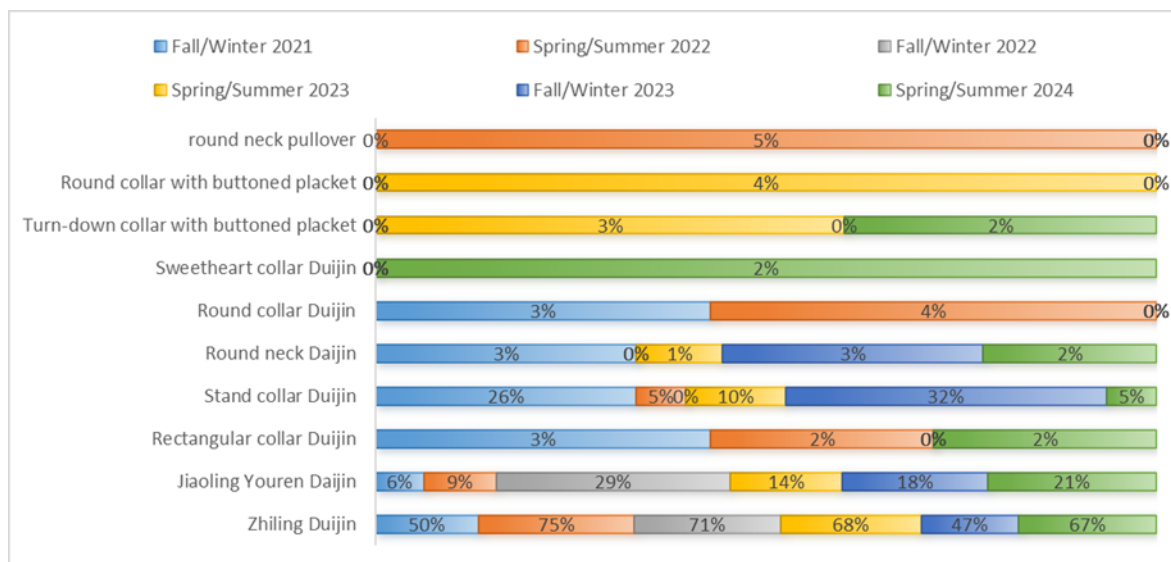


Figure 4. Collar Type Proportions for 'Shan' Over Various Seasons

Ao primarily appears in winter; therefore, only winter data has been used for analysis. The collar types of Ao include Stand collar Duijin (立领对襟), Rectangular collar Duijin (方领对襟), Zhiling Duijin (直领对襟), and Jiaoling Youren Daijin (交领右衽大襟), offering a variety of designs.

Stand collar Duijin had a popularity share of 40% in Fall/Winter 2021, which further increased to 50% in Fall/Winter 2022, and remained around 45% in Fall/Winter 2023. This indicates that Stand collar Duijin, as a traditional and classic collar type, maintained a stable and continuous popularity trend over these seasons.

The popularity of the Rectangular collar Duijin and Zhiling Duijin was moderate. In Fall/Winter 2021, their shares were 6% and 9%, respectively. However, Rectangular collar Duijin gradually increased to 11% and 15% in the following two seasons, while Zhiling Duijin decreased to 5% and then rose to 37%. This indicates that although Rectangular collar Duijin is not yet a mainstream trend, its popularity is increasing; Zhiling Duijin, on the other hand, showed unstable trends.

Round collar Duijin had shares of 0% and 3% in Fall/Winter 2021 and 2023, respectively, with a sudden increase to 17% in Fall/Winter 2022, showing significant fluctuations. Jiaoling Youren Daijin had popularity shares of 21% and 17% in Fall/Winter 2021 and 2022, respectively, indicating relatively stable popularity. However, its popularity dropped to 0% in Fall/Winter 2023. Round neck Daijin (圆领大襟) had a share of 21% in Fall/Winter 2021, indicating a certain level of popularity. However, its popularity rapidly declined to 0% in the following two seasons, meaning this style was no longer favoured in subsequent seasons. Turn-down collars (翻领) had very low shares in all three seasons, at 3%, 0%, and 0%, respectively. This shows that turn-down collars as a collar type for Ao are not receiving mainstream attention, as shown in Figure 5.

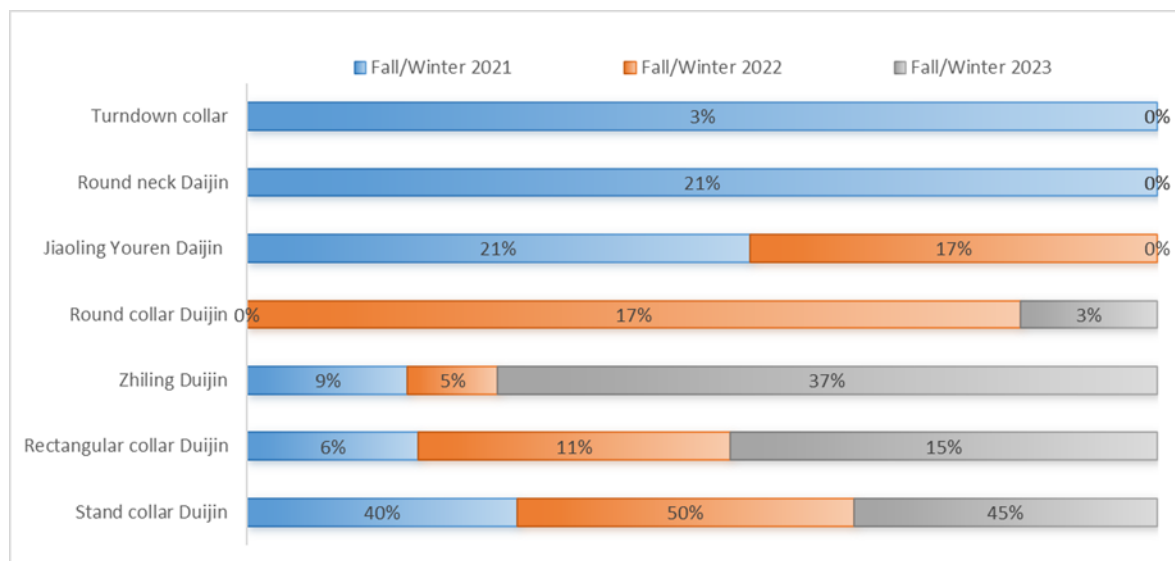


Figure 5. Proportion of Collar Types in Ao

The primary collar types for robes are Round neck Daijin (圆领大襟) and Jiaoling Youren Daijin (交领右衽大襟). Round-neck Daijin has consistently maintained a high level of popularity over the past seasons. In Fall/Winter 2021, it accounted for 75%, then rose to 89% in Spring/Summer 2022, and still held a high share of close to 80% in Spring/Summer 2023. Only in Fall/Winter 2023 did its share decrease, indicating that it remains the mainstream collar type for robes.

Jiaoling Youren Daijin had a share of 25% in Fall/Winter 2021, which dropped to 11% in Spring/Summer 2022. However, it began to gradually rise from Fall/Winter 2022, reaching a high proportion of 60% in Fall/Winter 2023. Nevertheless, similar to Round neck Daijin, it also saw a decrease to 50% in Spring/Summer 2024. This suggests that while Jiaoling Youren Daijin is popular, its overall share remains below that of Round neck Daijin.

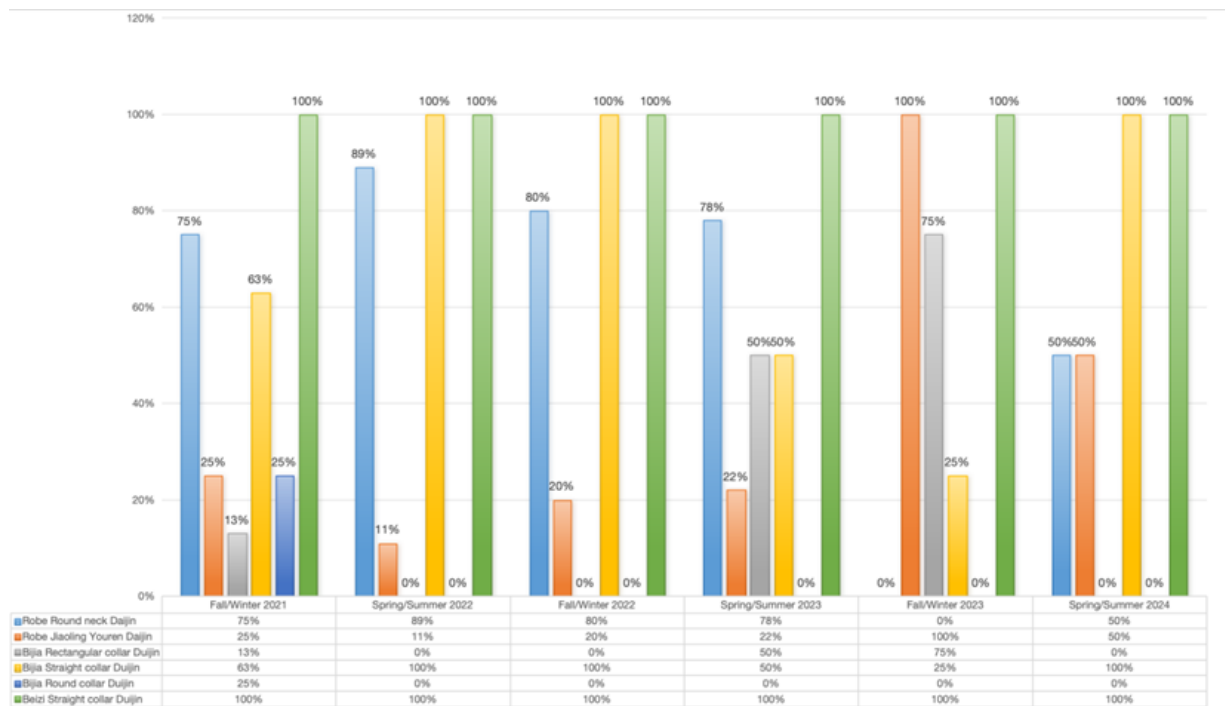


Figure 6. Collar Type Trends in Robes, Bijia, and Beizi

Bijia and Beizi are garments worn over aoqun and shanqun as outer layers. The collar styles of Bijia vary, including Rectangular, Straight, and Round collar Duijin. Rectangular collar Duijin had a market share of 13% in Fall/Winter 2021, dropped to 0% in 2022, surged to 50% in Spring/Summer 2023, and rose to 75% in Fall/Winter 2023.

Straight-collar Duijin, on the other hand, has been relatively stable and continuously popular. Since Fall/Winter 2021, its market share has consistently been high, with percentages of 63%, 100%, 100%, 50%, 25%, and 100% across different seasons. This indicates that Straight collar Duijin is widely favoured throughout the year. In contrast, Round collar Duijin has not been favoured in the market, appearing in only one season. Additionally, Straight collar Duijin is the only collar style mentioned for Beizi and Banbi styles. The data shows that it accounts for 100% of these two styles, indicating that it is the mainstream collar style for both, as shown in Figure 6.

The collar designs of Hanfu exhibit differences in popularity across various styles, which are influenced by the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. From the perspective of relative advantage and compatibility

characteristics in this theory, popular collar styles generally have a high level of market acceptance because they embody traditional cultural significance and align with modern dressing needs.

In Shan, Bijia and Beizi, the straight collar with a front opening is the most popular mainstream collar style, demonstrating its stable and classic status. This design maintains a high market share across most seasons, indicating that it not only holds a strong relative advantage but is also compatible with modern daily wear. Interview data show that B09 stated, "I prefer the straight-collar front-opening because it is simple, convenient, and suitable for daily wear [15]." This feedback further proves that the straight-collar front opening has gained widespread market acceptance due to its simplicity and adaptability.

In Ao styles, the stand-collar front opening is the dominant collar style in autumn and winter, showing consistent stability and becoming the most popular design during these seasons. It meets the seasonal demands of autumn and winter, offering both traditional aesthetics and warmth, giving it a clear relative advantage.

The round-collar overlapping front (Dajin) is undoubtedly the mainstream collar style in robe styles, maintaining an absolute advantage across multiple seasons. Its simple and elegant design makes it suitable for various occasions and highly compatible, which explains its strong market demand in daily life.

In contrast, the crossed collar with a right-over-left overlapping front (Jiaoling Youren Dajin) maintains a certain market share in some seasons but has relatively lower overall popularity. While this traditional collar style carries historical charm, its weaker compatibility has prevented it from becoming a mainstream choice.

Sleeve Type Trend Analysis

Common sleeve types in Hanfu include wide, narrow, large, and pipa sleeves (琵琶 sleeves) (shaped like a pipa).

From Fall/Winter 2021 to Spring/Summer 2024, the proportion of wide sleeves in shirts gradually increased from 37% to 68%, indicating their widespread recognition and popularity. In contrast, narrow sleeves, though more popular in Fall/Winter 2022 and Spring/Summer 2023, saw their share decline to only 8% by Spring/Summer 2024. Large sleeves were notably prevalent in Fall/Winter 2021 and Spring/Summer 2022, with shares of 33% and 25%, respectively, but their popularity gradually declined, accounting for only 20% in Spring/Summer 2024. As a niche style, pipa sleeves consistently had a share of less than 10%.

Pipa sleeves dominated in Ao, with a share of 66% in Fall/Winter 2021, slightly rising to 70% in Fall/Winter 2022, but dropping to 45% in Fall/Winter 2023. Despite this decline, they remained the leading trend. Wide sleeves accounted for 20% in Fall/Winter 2021, slightly decreased to 18% in

Fall/Winter 2022, but surged to 47% in Fall/Winter 2023, making them the most popular sleeve style of that season. Narrow sleeves had an average share of about 9%, making them relatively unpopular. Meanwhile, large sleeves accounted for only 3% in Fall/Winter 2021, increased to 6% in Fall/Winter 2022, but completely lost market share in Fall/Winter 2023, falling below narrow sleeves.

In robes, the popularity of narrow sleeves showed a gradual increase, rising from 25% in Fall/Winter 2021 to 45% in Spring/Summer 2023, followed by a notable decline in subsequent seasons. Wide sleeves were highly popular in Fall/Winter 2021, with a 42% share, but dramatically dropped to 0% in Spring/Summer 2022 and 2023, before rebounding to 50% in Spring/Summer 2024, indicating significant fluctuations in their popularity. Large sleeves showed an unstable trend, with shares of 8% in Fall/Winter 2021 and 44% in Spring/Summer 2022, but they fell to 20% in Fall/Winter 2022, 33% in Spring/Summer 2023, and eventually dropped to 0% in subsequent seasons. The share of pipa sleeves was relatively stable in earlier seasons, at 25%, 22%, and 40%, but suddenly rose to 100% in Fall/Winter 2023, before falling back to 50% in Spring/Summer 2024, showing significant fluctuations in their popularity, as shown in Figure 7.

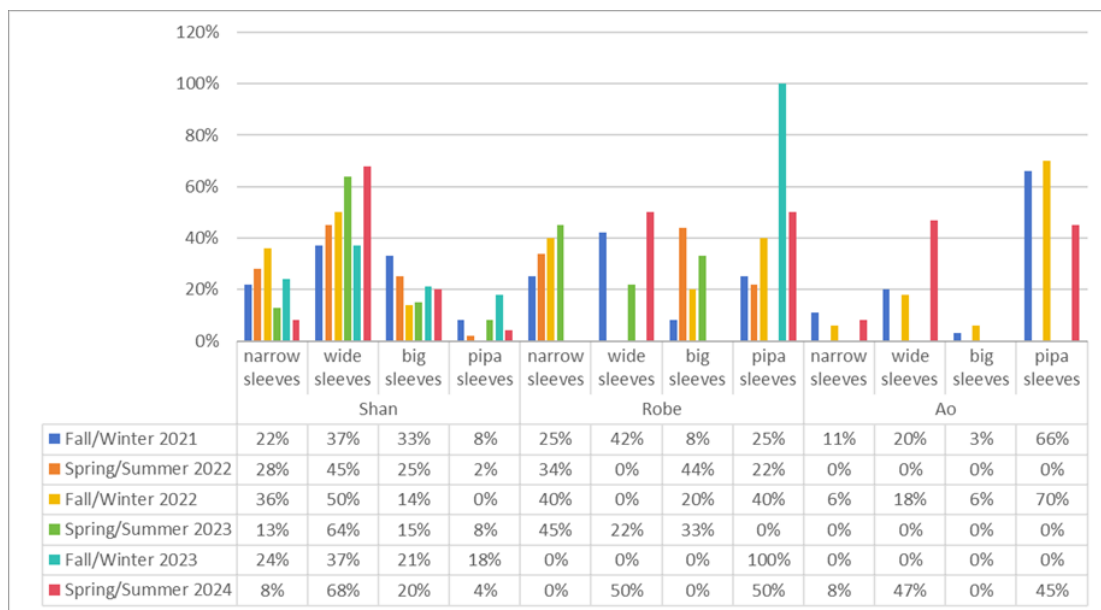


Figure 7. Sleeve Type Proportion Chart

The popularity trends of Hanfu sleeve styles exhibit distinct characteristics and patterns across different clothing types. In Shan and Pao, wide sleeves are the mainstream sleeve style and have shown a steady upward trend in popularity. B10 mentioned, "The wide-sleeve design not only has a classical aesthetic but also feels unrestrictive when worn." This feedback indicates that wide sleeves align with modern consumers' demand for comfort while also resonating with traditional aesthetics. The rising

trend of wide sleeves demonstrates a high relative advantage, as their design is highly compatible with modern consumers' preference for loose and free-flowing clothing.

On the other hand, large sleeves are relatively bulky, restricting consumers' freedom of movement. As a result, they are less adaptable to modern daily wear, leading to a lower overall popularity. When a design lacks high compatibility with modern consumers' daily lifestyles, its market expansion and acceptance rate tend to be relatively slow.

In Ao styles, the pipa sleeves are the most prominent sleeve style. Despite some seasonal fluctuations, they have maintained a high level of popularity overall. During interviews, B06 stated, "Pipa sleeves are an elegant design rich in traditional cultural significance, making them especially suitable for festivals and formal occasions." This indicates that pipa sleeves have a specific market positioning.

In contrast, wide sleeves in Ao styles have significantly increased in popularity in recent seasons, emerging as a newly favoured choice. This further confirms the growing preference among modern consumers for comfortable and loose-fitting styles.

Skirt Popularity Trends Analysis

In modern Hanfu, skirts have become increasingly varied over the past three years as an essential garment for women. In the modern Hanfu, skirts have become increasingly diverse over the past three years. Data analysis shows that the "Return to Han and Tang" brand has introduced over ten types of skirts in these three years. However, the mainstream skirt styles mainly focus on the following types: Jiaoyu Skirt, Baidie Skirt, Horse-faced Pleated Skirt, One-piece Pleated Skirt, Sipoanjian Skirt (四破三裯裙), etc (Figure 8).

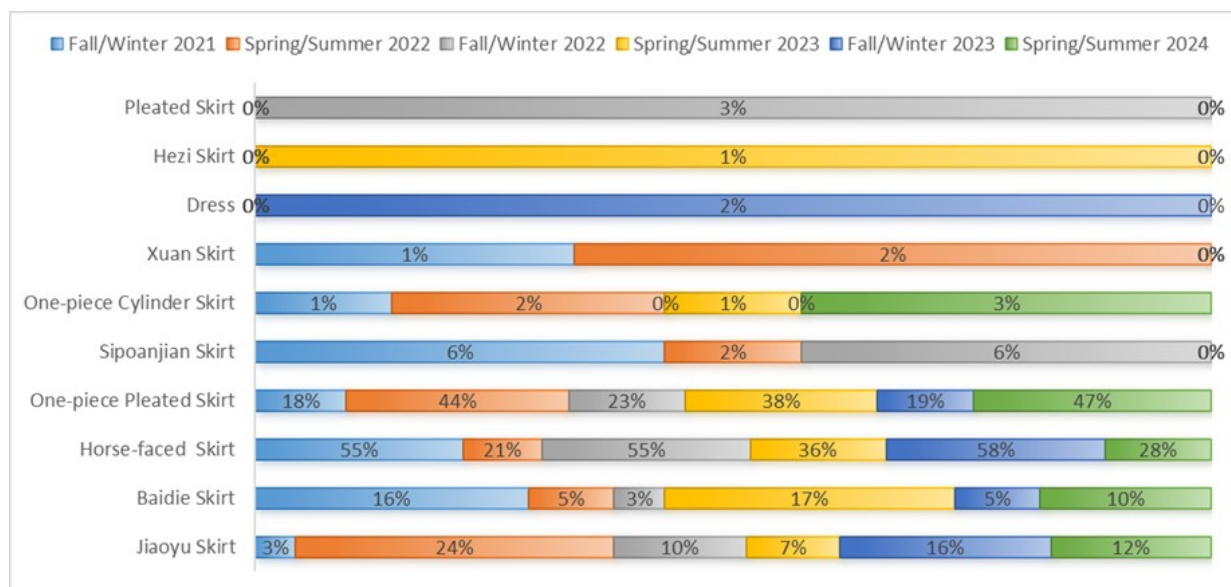


Figure 8. Skirt Type Proportion Chart

The One-piece Pleated Skirt tends to have a lower presence during the autumn and winter seasons but shows a clear upward trend in the spring and summer, indicating its preference for warmer weather. In contrast, the Horse-faced Skirt holds a higher share in the autumn and winter seasons, typically ranging between 50% to 60%, and decreases to 20% to 40% during the spring and summer, still popular but less so than the One-piece Pleated Skirt. The trends of the One-piece Pleated Skirt and Horse-faced Skirt are opposite, with one prevailing in the colder seasons and the other in the warmer ones, demonstrating a distinct seasonal variation. While the Baidie Skirt does not have the highest share, its trend tends towards stability, particularly increasing during the spring and summer seasons, as shown in Figure 9.

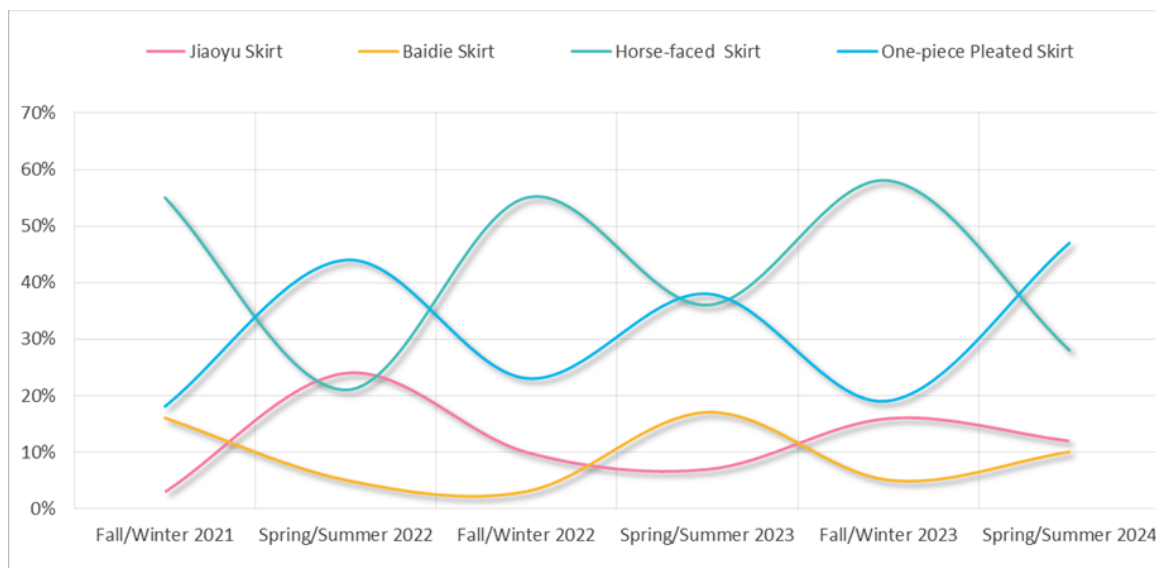


Figure 9. Main Skirt Type Trend Chart

The Jiaoyu Skirt has an unstable share, but it remains a mainstream choice among various skirt types. It reached a high of 24% during the Spring/Summer season of 2022, but decreased to lower levels in subsequent seasons, with a share of 12% in Spring/Summer 2024. The Jiaoyu Skirt includes several typical styles, as illustrated in Figure 10.

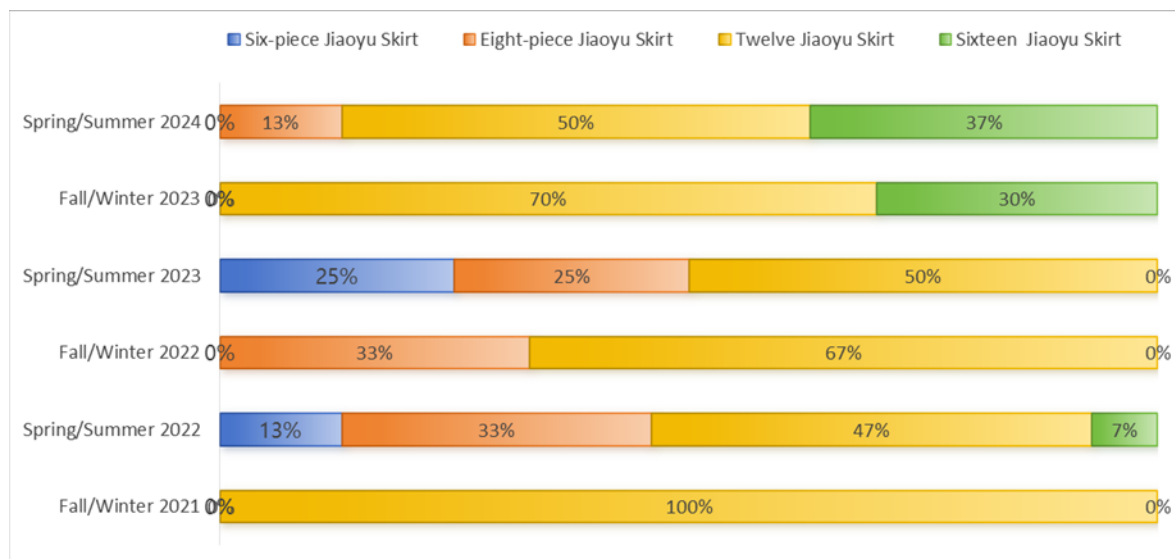


Figure 10. Jiaoyu Skirt Proportion Chart

The Six-piece Jiaoyu Skirt appeared only once during the Spring/Summer season of 2023. The Eight-piece Jiaoyu Skirt appeared only once each in the Spring/Summer 2022, Autumn/Winter 2022, and Spring/Summer 2023 seasons, showing an overall unstable trend. In contrast, the Twelve Jiaoyu Skirt has been relatively stable, appearing in every season of the sample data, with a generally stable overall trend. The Sixteen Jiaoyu Skirt was only recorded during the Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter seasons of 2023. The Twelve Jiaoyu Skirt is a mainstream and relatively stable choice among the Jiaoyu Skirts. Other types of Jiaoyu Skirts appear less frequently, with less clear trends in the sample data. The Sipoanjian Skirt had a low share during the Fall/Winter season of 2021 and the Spring/Summer season of 2022, both at 6%, but it completely disappeared in subsequent seasons. The One-piece Cylinder Skirt also showed a low share, at 2% during the Spring/Summer season of 2022 and 3% in Spring/Summer 2024, with low shares in other seasons as well. Other skirt styles only appeared in specific Spring/Summer seasons, and their shares were consistently low.

Skirt-wearing styles are primarily divided into two forms: high-waisted and chest-high. An analysis is conducted using the four mainstream skirt types as examples, as shown in Figure 11. Among chest-high skirts, there are mainly two styles: the Jiaoyu Skirt and the One-piece Pleated Skirt. However, chest-high skirts account for a relatively small proportion of the sample data, with noticeable fluctuations across different seasons, indicating their limited popularity.

In contrast, high-waisted skirts include three main styles: One-piece Pleated Skirt, Baidie Skirt, and Horse-faced Pleated Skirt. These styles occupy a significant share in the sample data, maintaining stability across multiple seasons, and even reaching 100% in certain seasons. This suggests that high-waisted skirts are more mainstream and widely favoured in modern Hanfu.

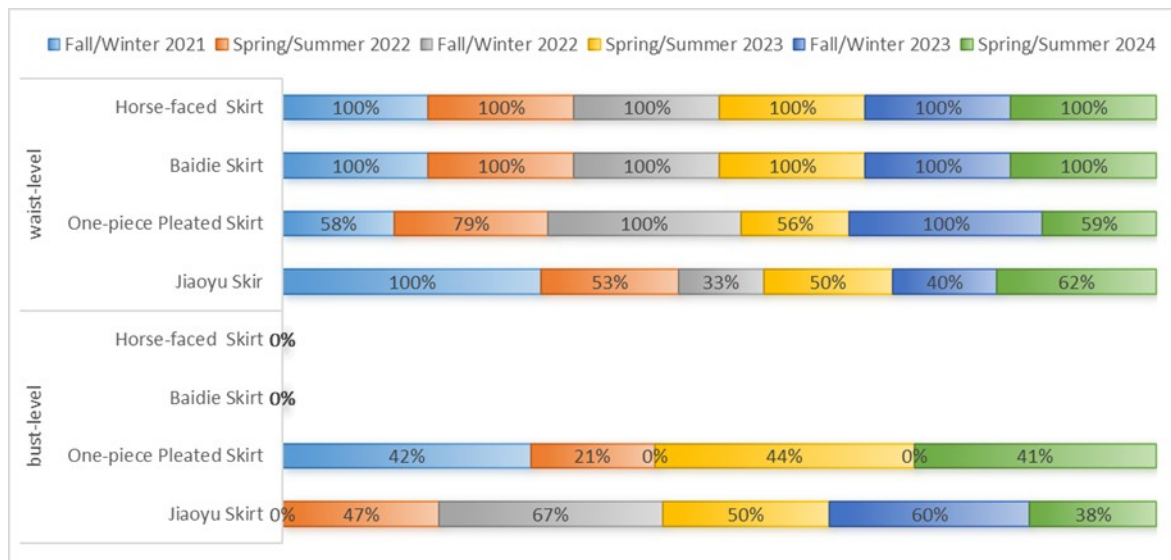


Figure 11. Skirt Wearing Styles Proportion Chart

The analysis of Hanfu skirt style trends reveals distinct seasonal popularity patterns. The one-piece pleated skirt and Baidie skirt are more popular during spring and summer, whereas the horse-faced skirt gains prominence in autumn and winter. The seasonal differences between these two skirt types are significant, making them the dominant choices for different times of the year.

According to interviewee B012, "I particularly love wearing horse-faced skirts. They have become especially popular in recent years. They can be paired with various outfits, including coats and down jackets in winter." This indicates that the horse-faced skirt is highly compatible and observable, making it a versatile and adaptable option for different styles and occasions.

The Jiaoyu skirt is another mainstream choice among Hanfu skirts, but its popularity fluctuates significantly across different seasons. Among Jiaoyu skirts, the Twelve Jiaoyu Skirt stands out as the more widely favoured option. Interviewee B06 stated, "The Jiaoyu skirt has a unique design, especially the Twelve Jiaoyu Skirt, which showcases a rich layering effect and classical beauty."

Regarding wearing preferences, waist-high skirts are noticeably more popular, demonstrating high market acceptance and stability. During interviews, B08 shared, "waist-high skirts are very comfortable to wear. Whether for daily outings or attending events, they are suitable and easy to style." This feedback further confirms that waist-high skirts have become a top choice among modern consumers due to their comfort, adaptability, and compatibility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Seasonal Relative Advantage

The popularity trend of modern Hanfu exhibits significant seasonal variations, which are closely related to its relative advantage. Different styles, designs, and details demonstrate varying levels of competitiveness in the market due to their adaptability to specific seasons.

Data analysis indicates that Ming-style Hanfu, known for its strong insulation and layered structure, dominates the autumn and winter markets [16]. Its core combinations include Aoqun paired with cloaks, Bijia and Banbi. The use of thick fabrics and multi-layered structures provides excellent cold resistance, meeting the needs of consumers in colder seasons. This thermal advantage allows Ming-style Hanfu to maintain a high market share in autumn and winter, as consumers prefer styles that balance traditional cultural expression with practicality, further driving its market expansion.

Song-style and Tang-style Hanfu are more competitive in the spring and summer markets due to their lightweight and breathable features. Shanqun and Banbi paired with Shanqun are particularly popular in warm seasons. This trend suggests that consumers prefer styles with high breathability and comfort in warmer weather, which gives Song-style and Tang-style Hanfu a relative advantage in spring and summer, further promoting their adoption.

The details of Hanfu styles also reflect distinct seasonal relative advantages. For instance, in autumn and winter, Ao-style garments with standing collars and crossed lapels provide better warmth due to their high-neck design, making them more popular in the market. Pipa sleeves, which feature a tight cuff design, enhance wind resistance and warmth, further strengthening their suitability for cold weather.

In contrast, in spring and summer, straight-collar crossed-lapel tops gain popularity due to their simple and elegant design, which enhances their compatibility with modern fashion. Wide sleeves remain favoured as they align with modern consumers' preference for loose and breathable clothing, maintaining a high level of market acceptance.

The market trends of skirt styles also illustrate the role of relative advantage. The horse-face skirt, often made with thick jacquard fabric, is more popular in autumn and winter due to its warmth and layering potential, which enhances its market competitiveness. Meanwhile, one-piece pleated skirts and Baidie skirts, known for their lightweight and breathable characteristics, are more attractive in the spring and summer markets, catering to consumers' comfort needs. The functional attributes of these skirt types further demonstrate the crucial role of relative advantage in expanding the Hanfu market.

In conclusion, seasonal fashion trends are closely linked to relative advantage. The popularity of modern Hanfu is not solely a result of cultural revival but is also influenced by the adaptability of different styles, designs, and details to various seasons.

Compatibility and the Expansion of the Modern Hanfu Market

The compatibility of modern Hanfu influences market expansion and consumer acceptance. Data analysis shows that lightweight styles such as Shanqun and Beizi paired with bandeau skirts are more popular in spring and summer due to their simple design and breathability, aligning with modern daily wear needs. This indicates that highly compatible styles are more likely to spread and maintain popularity. Interviews further confirm this, with respondent B07 stating, “Beizi and Shanqun are both beautiful and simple, making them suitable for daily wear.” This compatibility enhances Hanfu's market acceptance, making it more appealing to modern consumers [17].

The design of Hanfu's collars, sleeves, and skirts significantly impacts market acceptance. Among them, the waist-length skirt stands out for its convenience and stability, making it more compatible with the spring and summer market. Data analysis shows that Waist-length skirts dominate this season, with respondent B08 commenting, “Waist-length skirts are easy to wear, stay in place, and are simple to style.” This suggests that designs adapted to modern lifestyles are more competitive and facilitate market expansion.

In contrast, the Jiaoling Youren Dajin has relatively low acceptance in the modern market [18]. Its highly traditional design does not easily match the daily wear needs of contemporary consumers, resulting in a smaller market share. Although some consumers still appreciate its cultural significance, its low compatibility limits the speed of its market expansion.

Compatibility is crucial for expanding the Hanfu market, but it must be balanced with cultural authenticity. Data analysis indicates that after peaking in the autumn and winter of 2022, the market share of Hanfu-inspired fashion declined, reflecting a short-term trend followed by long-term adjustments. While modernised designs enhance compatibility, they may dilute the cultural essence of Hanfu, reducing acceptance among certain consumers. Interviews support this observation, with some consumers stating, “Modernized designs are nice, but if they lose the cultural essence of Hanfu, they become meaningless.” Therefore, the Hanfu market must balance modernisation and cultural preservation to ensure long-term stability and growth.

Observability and the Popularity Diffusion of Modern Hanfu

The Influence of Film and Television on Hanfu Popularity

Film and television enhance Hanfu's observability, increasing its aesthetic and cultural influence. Data analysis shows that Tang-style Hanfu experienced rapid growth in the spring and summer of 2024, surpassing Song-style Hanfu, likely influenced by historical dramas. Iconic elements like Chest-high ruqun and Peibo in these productions enhance audience recognition of Tang-style Hanfu and influence

purchasing decisions. From an observability perspective, historical dramas showcase Hanfu and reinforce cultural identity, lowering consumer hesitation and driving market expansion [19].

The Role of Cultural Events in Hanfu Market Expansion

National and local cultural events significantly enhance Hanfu's visibility. Events like the Spring Festival Gala, Hanfu festivals, and traditional cultural performances bring Hanfu into public spaces, increasing public interest. Interviews show that the 2024 Spring Festival Gala featured Ming, Song, and Tang-style Hanfu, directly boosting market engagement. According to observability theory, large-scale cultural events showcase Hanfu and enhance its social acceptance, making it easier for consumers to adopt Hanfu and accelerating market expansion.

The Impact of Social Media on Hanfu Popularity

In recent years, emerging digital media platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and Xiaohongshu have effectively enhanced the observability and market impact of Hanfu through styling videos, fashion transformations, and cultural content, thereby facilitating its widespread diffusion among younger generations [20]. Furthermore, Hanfu catwalk shows provide an energetic stage that reinterprets traditional expressions of femininity, thereby enhancing consumer engagement and reinforcing the cultural relevance of Hanfu [21]. Social media plays a crucial role in Hanfu's popularity by increasing its observability. Data analysis shows that from 2021 to 2024, the Hanfu market experienced multiple growth cycles, with viral trends like the Horse-face skirt rapidly spreading on short video platforms and influencing consumer demand.

Platforms like Douyin, Kuaishou, and Xiaohongshu popularise Hanfu through styling videos, fashion transformations, and cultural content. For example, the horse-face skirt trend rose in late 2022 and became mainstream in 2023, closely linked to social media promotion. As 1 noted, "I saw many people wearing a horse-face skirt paired with modern outfits, so I bought one too." This demonstrates how social media increases Hanfu's visibility, accelerating market expansion.

Additionally, live commerce enhances Hanfu's observability. Hanfu brands use live-streaming to showcase styling tips, fabric details, and outfit pairings, reducing consumer hesitation and increasing brand awareness. This high observability not only strengthens market recognition but also drives sales conversion.

CONCLUSION

Based on the diffusion of innovation theory, this study systematically analyses the popularity mechanism of modern Hanfu, focusing on the impact of relative advantage, compatibility, and observability on its market diffusion. The findings indicate that the seasonal popularity trends of Hanfu

are closely linked to its relative advantage, while its market diffusion is significantly influenced by compatibility and observability. Moreover, this study expands the application of the diffusion of innovation theory in traditional clothing research, addressing a gap in existing literature. The research findings help to understand the core characteristics of the modern Hanfu market and provide strategic insights for Hanfu brands and designers [22]. These include optimising products based on seasonal trends, leveraging social media to enhance observability, and improving compatibility between Hanfu and modern fashion to facilitate market expansion and attract a broader consumer base. In the future, as the Hanfu market continues to evolve, long-term data tracking, cross-cultural research, and consumer psychological analysis will further deepen the understanding of the revival of traditional clothing culture and provide more precise theoretical support for industry development.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization – Lin Y, Yang C; Methodology – Lin Y, Yang C; Formal analysis – Lin Y, Yang C; Investigation – Lin Y; Resources – Lin Y; Writing-original draft preparation – Lin Y, Yang C; Writing, review and editing – Yang C, Li H; Visualization – Yang C; Supervision – Zain MZM. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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