

Research on Cultural Communication Strategies and Cross-Border Development Paths for New Chinese-Style Children's Wear

Jiayi Ruan¹, Chengen Li^{1*}, Sixian Lu²

¹ College of International Economics & Trade, Ningbo University of Finance & Economics, Ningbo, 315175, China

² Ningbo University of Finance & Economics, Ningbo, 315175, China

*Corresponding author Email: 35101060@qq.com

Received 5 January 2026; Accepted 6 February 2026; Published 10 March 2026

© 2026 The Author(s). This is an open access article under the CC BY license

Abstract: As a representative carrier that integrates traditional Chinese culture with contemporary design, new Chinese-style Children's wear has become an important medium for disseminating Chinese culture internationally, supported by the rise of the “Guochao” (China Chic) trend and the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce. Drawing upon cultural communication theory, brand internationalization theory, and digital trade theory, this study systematically analyzes the cultural communication mechanisms and market expansion paths of new Chinese-style children's wear in the process of going global. From four dimensions—cultural symbol innovation, cross-border channel adaptation, digital communication, and technological empowerment—the research investigates how this category leverages cultural value and cross-border innovation to realize the transformation from product export to cultural identity transmission.

By examining the overseas practices of leading brands such as Balabala, Youlan, and Li Ning Kids, this study summarizes successful experiences and challenges, and proposes differentiated strategies informed by cultural confidence, offering theoretical and practical insights for the internationalization of children's wear brands. The findings suggest that the global expansion of new Chinese-style children's wear is not merely a commercial activity but a process of transmitting cultural soft power. Going forward, efforts should focus on constructing a children's wear cultural database, enhancing the digital cross-border ecosystem, and strengthening international educational cooperation to transition from “products going global” to “values going global.”

Keywords: New Chinese-style children's wear; Cultural going global; Cross-border e-commerce; Cultural communication; Children's wear brands; Cultural symbols

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Significance

In recent years, the resurgence of traditional Chinese culture and the rise of the Guochao (China-chic) movement have significantly reshaped China's fashion landscape. New Chinese-style apparel, which synthesizes traditional aesthetics with contemporary design logic, has rapidly expanded within the domestic market and increasingly penetrated global markets via cross-border e-commerce channels. Industry statistics indicate that, in 2023, the market size of new Chinese-style apparel exceeded RMB 1 billion, registering a compound annual growth rate of more than 100% over the preceding three years. Within this broader trend, children's wear—drawing upon traditional motifs, embroidery techniques, and modern functional design—has emerged as an important vehicle for cultural transmission.

The accelerated development of global digital trade has provided Chinese children's wear brands with unprecedented opportunities for international expansion. In 2023, China's cross-border e-commerce exports of apparel continued to grow, with children's wear achieving rapid market penetration in Southeast Asia, Europe, and the United States. Southeast Asia, due to its cultural proximity and demographic structure, accounted for nearly 90% of exports, whereas Western markets displayed stronger demand for high-end, design-oriented products. Notably, Chinese brands such as Bosideng and HLA have demonstrated that internationalized branding and professionalized operations can substantially enhance brand equity and global recognition.

Despite these favorable conditions, the overseas expansion of new Chinese-style children's wear remains constrained by several structural challenges. These include cultural distance and the risk of symbolic misinterpretation, product homogenization, rising supply chain and fulfillment costs, and insufficient localization strategies. Consequently, how to integrate cultural narratives, product innovation, and cross-border channel strategies to construct a sustainable competitive advantage in a volatile global environment has become an urgent question for both industry practitioners and academic researchers.

Against this background, the study of how new Chinese-style children's wear can effectively participate in global markets, function as a carrier of cultural soft power, and facilitate cultural identity construction holds significant theoretical and practical value. It not only contributes to understanding the global dissemination of contemporary Chinese culture but also provides insights into China's participation in global digital trade and cultural industries.

1.2 Research Questions and Analytical Framework

Focusing on the global expansion and cultural communication of new Chinese-style children's wear, this study raises the following core research questions:

1. How can new Chinese-style children's wear achieve effective cross-cultural transmission of cultural meanings through cultural symbol innovation and narrative reconstruction?
2. How can refined cross-border channel operations facilitate both market expansion and brand-building?
3. How can digital communication technologies and technological empowerment enhance cultural dissemination and operational efficiency?
4. What key challenges do brands encounter during overseas expansion, and how can these be addressed through policy support and industry collaboration?

To answer these questions, this study constructs a comprehensive analytical framework that integrates theoretical analysis, current status review, problem identification, strategy formulation, case verification, and policy recommendations. The analysis is structured around four dimensions:

- Cultural Symbol Innovation
- Cross-Border Channel Adaptation
- Digital Communication and Media Technologies
- Technological Empowerment and Systemic Support

This framework enables a multi-level investigation into how cultural content, market mechanisms, and digital technologies jointly shape the internationalization pathways of new Chinese-style children's wear.

2. Cultural Connotations and Current Status of New Chinese-Style Children's Wear

2.1 Cultural Connotations of New Chinese-Style Children's Wear

New Chinese-style children's wear represents a contemporary reinterpretation of traditional Chinese dress forms, integrating classical aesthetics, intangible cultural heritage techniques, and modern functional design. This category derives its cultural richness from three core dimensions: the modern adaptation of traditional silhouettes,

the inheritance and innovation of traditional craftsmanship, and the contemporary translation of cultural symbols.

(1) Modern Adaptation of Traditional Silhouettes

New Chinese-style children's wear preserves key traditional structures—such as stand-up collars, pankou (frog buttons), and mǎmiànqún (horse-face skirts)—while embedding modern ergonomic and functional refinements. For example:

- Adjustable stand-up collars improve comfort and accommodate children's varying age groups.
- A-line reinterpretations of the horse-face skirt enhance mobility and playability.
- Replacing traditional pankou with snap buttons or Velcro facilitates independent dressing for younger children.

Such adaptations retain the visual logic of traditional Chinese garments while aligning with contemporary standards of comfort, safety, and children's daily activity needs.

(2) Inheritance and Innovation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Techniques

Brands frequently integrate techniques such as Suzhou embroidery (Suzhou Xiu), seed embroidery (dazi xiu), and kesi silk weaving, merging craftsmanship with simplified modern design. For instance, the brand “Hiembroid” incorporates classical patterns such as intertwined peonies and jiangya haishui (stylized ocean wave motifs) using muted color palettes consistent with global aesthetic preferences. This synthesis enhances both the cultural and artistic value of children's wear, positioning these products as culturally expressive rather than purely functional.

(3) Contemporary Translation of Cultural Symbols

New Chinese-style children's wear selectively extracts cultural symbols with universal positive connotations—such as bamboo (fortitude), lotus (purity), and cloud motifs (auspiciousness)—and reinterprets them through contemporary graphic and material languages. This process rejuvenates traditional symbols and enhances cross-cultural communicability, enabling global audiences to engage with these motifs through accessible visual narratives.

2.2 Market Size and Emerging Trends in the Overseas Expansion of New Chinese-Style Children's Wear

2.2.1 Domestic Market Landscape

In 2023, the domestic market for new Chinese-style children's wear exceeded RMB 1 billion, maintaining a three-year compound annual growth rate of over 100%. Projections indicate that the market size will reach RMB 2 billion by 2025, with annual growth rates stabilizing above 30%. New Chinese-style children's wear has become a key segment driven by post-80s and post-90s parents who prioritize both cultural identity and aesthetic refinement in children's clothing.

2.2.2 Cross-Border E-Commerce Export Dynamics

Children's wear accounted for roughly 25% of China's cross-border e-commerce apparel exports in 2023, a growth rate outpacing that of the overall apparel sector. Southeast Asia dominated with approximately 90% of exports due to cultural proximity, whereas Europe and North America accounted for around 8%, yet commanded significantly higher average order values and stronger premium potential.

The rise of platform-led trade ecosystems—such as TikTok Shop, Shopee, and Amazon Global—has accelerated the diffusion of new Chinese-style products worldwide.

2.2.3 Regional Market Characteristics

(a) Southeast Asian Market

Southeast Asian consumers, particularly those in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, exhibit strong affinity for Chinese aesthetics due to cultural familiarity and the presence of considerable Chinese diaspora communities.

Consumer preferences center on:

- festival-themed apparel (e.g., Lunar New Year collections),
- parent-child coordinated outfits,
- breathable, lightweight fabrics suited to tropical climates.

Sales strategies emphasize a hybrid model combining Lazada/Shopee flagship stores with offline pop-up experiences, forming a “content seeding + experiential retail” closed loop.

(b) European and North American Markets

Western consumers tend to emphasize sustainability, comfort, and minimalist design. While curiosity toward Chinese cultural elements is growing, effective cultural storytelling and aesthetic contextualization remain essential to reducing “cultural discount.”

New Chinese-style children’s wear in Western markets often leverages:

- Amazon FBA, Etsy boutiques,
- refined product photography and brand storytelling,
- higher willingness-to-pay and premium positioning.

(c) Emerging Markets (Middle East, Latin America)

These markets demonstrate increasing receptivity to culturally distinctive children’s apparel but require adjustments in pricing strategies, climate-appropriate materials, and culturally sensitive designs.

2.3 Representative Brands in the Overseas Expansion of New Chinese-Style Children’s Wear

(1) Balabala: Localization-First Strategy in Southeast Asia

Balabala, as a leading domestic children’s wear brand, implements deeply localized marketing strategies tailored to major Southeast Asian markets. Key approaches include:

- developing festival-specific collections for Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Songkran;
- collaborating with local KOLs to create native-language content;
- integrating TikTok Shop livestreaming with offline pop-up stores.

This approach demonstrates that effective localization—culturally, linguistically, and commercially—is crucial for expanding into culturally proximate markets.

(2) Youlan: Sustainability and Cultural Minimalism for Western Markets

Youlan adopts a differentiated positioning centered on “eco-friendly and comfortable,” utilizing bamboo fiber and organic cotton to align with Western sustainability norms. The brand employs:

- minimalist reinterpretations of Chinese cultural elements,
- TikTok content emphasizing material quality and craftsmanship,
- collaborations with parenting influencers to build trust.

This case illustrates the potential of aligning universal values (sustainability) with cultural storytelling to reduce cultural discount and enhance brand premium.

(3) Li Ning Kids: High-End Cultural Branding Through Global Fashion Platforms

Li Ning Kids advances cultural internationalization by integrating Chinese visual symbols—such as ink-wash motifs and calligraphic prints—with sportswear functionality. Its strategic actions include:

- showcasing collections at New York and Paris Fashion Weeks;
- leveraging global fashion media to amplify cultural narratives;
- collaborating with artists and animation IPs to expand cultural relevance.

This case highlights the effectiveness of coupling high-end fashion platforms with cultural innovation to reshape global perceptions of Chinese children’s wear.

3. Core Challenges in the Overseas Expansion of New Chinese-Style Children’s Wear

3.1 Cultural Distance and Risks of Symbolic Misinterpretation

Cultural distance constitutes a primary challenge for the international expansion of new Chinese-style children's wear. The direct transplantation of traditional Chinese motifs into foreign markets may lead to cultural discount, misinterpretation, or even cultural conflict. Motifs that are auspicious in Chinese cultural contexts—such as dragons or phoenixes—can carry religious or political sensitivities in certain regions. Similarly, color symbolism varies cross-culturally: colors associated with celebration in China may connote mourning or taboo elsewhere.

(1) Cultural Discount

Cultural discount refers to the depreciation in value experienced by cultural products when they cross cultural boundaries due to varying interpretive frameworks. Without adequate explanatory narratives or contextualization, international consumers may fail to grasp the cultural meanings embedded in traditional motifs, diminishing the perceived value of the products and weakening brand identity.

(2) Symbolic Misinterpretation

Certain motifs may generate unintended negative associations in specific cultural or religious contexts. For example:

- Animal motifs may conflict with religious sensitivities (e.g., certain Islamic contexts).
- Color symbolism (e.g., white representing purity in China but associated with mourning in some Western cultures).
- Mythological symbols may be misunderstood or oversimplified without proper narrative framing.

Therefore, brands must engage in pre-market cultural research, ensuring the cultural safety and interpretive clarity of design elements.

3.2 Homogeneous Competition and Weak Brand Differentiation

The sector currently suffers from significant product homogenization. Many brands replicate similar design patterns, color palettes, and symbolic elements, leading to undifferentiated market offerings. As a result, price competition intensifies and profit margins erode.

(1) Design Homogenization

Numerous new Chinese-style children's wear brands rely heavily on widely available traditional motifs without meaningful reinterpretation. This results in:

- visually indistinguishable collections,
- limited brand recognition,
- reduced consumer loyalty and low repurchase rates.

The absence of original design weakens long-term competitiveness and inhibits the formation of sustainable brand equity.

(2) Lack of Cultural Narrative and Brand Storytelling

A considerable number of brands fail to articulate coherent brand narratives that connect products to cultural meaning. Consequently:

- consumers evaluate products primarily based on price and appearance,
- emotional connection and cultural identification remain weak,
- brands struggle to justify premium pricing.

To overcome this, brands must establish culturally grounded storytelling strategies that reinforce identity, authenticity, and value perception.

3.3 High Supply Chain and Fulfillment Costs

The overseas expansion of new Chinese-style children's wear is heavily constrained by escalating supply chain

and logistics costs. Children's wear, characterized by high variability in size, seasonal turnover, and relatively high return rates, further intensifies operational pressure.

(1) Rising Cross-Border Logistics and Volatility

International logistics costs remain sensitive to:

- exchange rate fluctuations,
- tariff and trade policy changes,
- energy prices,
- regional geopolitical uncertainties.

High return rates—stemming from size mismatches or expectation gaps—further increase fulfillment costs.

(2) Insufficient Supply Chain Flexibility

Many emerging brands rely on traditional large-batch production models, which struggle to meet the small-batch, multi-SKU, fast-iteration requirements of cross-border e-commerce. Typical challenges include:

- slow response to market demand fluctuations,
- limited production flexibility,
- higher inventory risks,
- inability to support customized product offerings.

Building a flexible, data-integrated supply chain has thus become a critical requirement for global competitiveness.

3.4 Insufficient Localization in Overseas Markets

Localization deficiencies represent a widespread challenge across Chinese brands entering global markets. Without a deep understanding of local consumer behavior, climate patterns, regulatory environments, and cultural norms, brands may encounter mismatches between product design and market expectations.

(1) Divergence in Consumer Preferences

Major differences in consumption habits include:

- Southeast Asian markets prioritize breathability and lightweight materials due to tropical climates.
- Western markets emphasize sustainability, organic materials, and minimalism.
- Middle Eastern markets may require modest design adaptations due to cultural norms.

Brands that fail to align with these expectations risk suboptimal sales performance.

(2) Climate-Specific Adaptation Gaps

Climatic conditions significantly influence preferred materials, garment thickness, and design structure. Misalignment between product attributes and environmental requirements often leads to low conversion rates and high returns.

(3) Lack of Localization in Marketing Content

Many brands rely on direct translations of Chinese marketing content, which often results in:

- culturally incongruent messaging,
- weakened emotional resonance,
- reduced communication effectiveness.

Effective localization requires culturally contextualized narratives, native-language communication, and local influencer engagement.

4. Strategies for Overseas Expansion and Cultural Communication of New Chinese-Style Children's Wear

4.1 Innovation of Cultural Symbols and Reconstruction of Narrative Frameworks

4.1.1 Establishing a Dedicated Cultural Symbol System for Children’ s Wear

To enhance the cross-cultural communicability of new Chinese-style children’ s wear, it is essential to construct a systematic cultural symbol library specifically tailored to children’ s apparel. This library should selectively extract traditional elements with universal positive connotations—such as bamboo (fortitude), lotus (purity), and cloud motifs (auspiciousness)—while avoiding culturally sensitive or contextually ambiguous patterns.

(1) Universal Symbol Extraction

Symbols that resonate across cultural boundaries serve as effective vehicles for cross-cultural communication. Motifs with widely recognized positive associations reduce the risk of cultural discount and facilitate intuitive understanding among international consumers. These elements can anchor the brand’ s visual identity and simultaneously enhance cultural expressiveness without overwhelming foreign audiences.

(2) Avoidance of Culturally Sensitive Patterns

Brands must systematically evaluate the cultural, religious, and socio-political sensitivities of target markets. Certain mythological creatures, colors, or symbolic patterns may evoke conflicting interpretations. Conducting cultural-sensitivity audits and pre-market research ensures that design choices align with local cultural norms while maintaining the authenticity of Chinese cultural expression.

(3) Application of Augmented Reality (AR) to Enhance Cultural Interpretation

AR technology provides an interactive medium for decoding cultural symbols. By scanning garment patterns via mobile devices, consumers can access multimedia narratives detailing the origin, craftsmanship, and cultural significance of specific motifs. This not only enhances consumer engagement but also transforms children’ s wear into an educational interface that strengthens cultural immersion and experiential learning.

4.1.2 Emotional Storytelling and Scenario-Based Cultural Communication

Cultural narratives embedded in products play a critical role in shaping brand identity and consumer perception. For new Chinese-style children’ s wear, emotionally resonant storytelling and scenario-based marketing serve as indispensable tools for constructing cultural meaning and generating cross-cultural empathy.

(1) Cultural Storytelling Through Digital Media

Short-form video platforms and key opinion leaders (KOLs) can narrate cultural stories behind design elements—such as the significance of the Twenty-Four Solar Terms—thus enabling consumers to emotionally connect with the symbolic meaning of the garments. These narratives bridge cultural gaps by transforming abstract symbols into relatable stories.

(2) Scenario-Based Marketing to Enhance Cultural Immersion

Product lines designed for specific scenarios—such as Lunar New Year celebrations, family gatherings, or school ceremonies—anchor cultural meaning within everyday practices. Scenario-based marketing not only reinforces the cultural utility of children’ s wear but also enhances emotional relevance and practical applicability.

(3) Parent–Child Co-Wearing and Interactive Experience Design

Developing coordinated parent–child outfits fosters intergenerational cultural identity-making. Such designs encourage parents and children to co-experience cultural aesthetics, strengthening both familial bonds and the cultural symbolic value of the garments. Parent–child participation amplifies brand recall and enhances cultural embedment in daily life.

4.2 Refined Cross-Border Channel Operations

4.2.1 Platform Coordination and Differentiated Market Operations

New Chinese-style children’ s wear must adopt platform-specific strategies based on the attributes and consumer behavior dynamics of different global regions.

(1) Southeast Asia: Social Commerce and Localized Operations

Platforms such as TikTok Shop, Shopee, and Lazada dominate the Southeast Asian digital ecosystem. Effective strategies include:

- partnerships with local KOLs and micro-influencers,
- localized content using native languages,
- integration of local payment and logistic systems.

This approach enables culturally congruent engagement with consumers and enhances conversion rates in culturally familiar markets.

(2) Europe and North America: Amazon and Boutique Platforms

For Western markets, Amazon FBA and Etsy offer structured logistics and high-quality consumer bases.

Strategies should emphasize:

- minimalist yet culturally expressive designs,
- premium positioning supported by refined design language,
- storytelling that contextualizes Chinese aesthetics within universal values such as sustainability or craftsmanship.

(3) Emerging Markets: Adaptability and Market Entry Flexibility

Middle Eastern and Latin American markets require flexible pricing strategies, sensitivity to cultural norms, and adaptation to local climatic conditions. Leveraging regional influencers and collaborating with localized marketplaces accelerates initial market penetration.

4.2.2 Experience Enhancement and Omnichannel Integration

Building an integrated omni-channel system enhances consumer engagement, strengthens brand loyalty, and improves overall shopping experience.

(1) Virtual Try-On Technologies

Virtual fitting rooms allow consumers to visualize garment fit and styling effects in real time, reducing uncertainty and return rates. This technology is especially effective in size-sensitive categories such as children's wear.

(2) Offline Pop-Up Stores for Immersive Cultural Experiences

Pop-up spaces can incorporate:

- traditional festival themes,
- interactive cultural workshops,
- live demonstrations of craft techniques.

These immersive experiences reinforce cultural identity and create emotional touchpoints that cannot be replicated online.

(3) Unified Omnichannel Membership Ecosystem

By integrating consumer data across online and offline channels, brands can establish a unified membership system that supports:

- personalized recommendations,
- cross-channel rewards,
- targeted promotional strategies,
- enhanced retention and repurchase rates.

4.3 Digital Communication and Technology-Driven Empowerment

4.3.1 Short-Video Ecosystems and Livestream Commerce

Short-video platforms have become critical tools for global cultural dissemination and consumer engagement.

(1) Multi-Layered Content Matrix

Brands can build a layered content structure composed of:

- official brand accounts,
- KOL and influencer collaborations,
- user-generated content (UGC).

This matrix enhances multi-directional communication and increases consumer touchpoints.

(2) Livestream Commerce for Accelerated Conversion

Livestreaming facilitates real-time interaction and contextualized explanations of garment features, cultural symbolism, and craftsmanship. Participation of designers, artisans, or child development experts may enhance trust and elevate the perceived cultural value of the products.

(3) Encouraging User-Generated Content

Engaging consumers through challenges, contests, and experiential sharing cultivates organic brand advocacy. UGC amplifies reach and reinforces community-based cultural diffusion.

4.3.2 AI-Enabled Customization and Data-Driven Operations

AI technologies provide robust analytical and customization capabilities for children's wear brands.

(1) AI-Driven Customization (C2M)

AI can analyze demographic data, body measurements, cultural preferences, and style inclinations to support:

- personalized size recommendations,
- custom pattern selection,
- on-demand production.

This reduces inventory pressure while enhancing consumer satisfaction.

(2) Data-Driven Product Development

Big-data analysis of global consumer behavior, regional cultural preferences, and competitor dynamics helps optimize product line planning, color selection, and size distribution.

(3) Precision Marketing

Algorithmic recommendation models enhance advertising efficiency by connecting culturally relevant content with appropriate user segments in different markets.

4.3.3 Green Supply Chains and Sustainability-Oriented Innovation

Sustainability is increasingly important in global apparel markets.

(1) Use of Environmentally Friendly Materials

Brands can utilize bamboo fiber, organic cotton, and recycled textiles to align with global environmental standards, as exemplified by Youlan's eco-centric product strategy.

(2) Adoption of Green Production Processes

Implementing low-water dyeing technologies, environmentally friendly pigments, and energy-efficient production systems reduces carbon emissions and environmental impact.

(3) Circular Economy Models

Exploring recycling programs, second-hand trading platforms, and rental models extends product life cycles and reinforces sustainable brand identity.

4.4 Policy Support and Industry-Level Collaboration

4.4.1 Governmental Support Mechanisms

Governmental departments can play a key role in facilitating internationalization through:

- cross-border e-commerce subsidies,
- streamlined customs procedures,
- enhanced intellectual property protection,
- cultural-export program integration.

Supporting participation in international exhibitions, fashion weeks, and cultural forums enhances global visibility for Chinese children's wear.

4.4.2 Industry Collaboration and Shared Infrastructure

A collaborative industry environment can reduce costs and strengthen collective competitiveness.

(1) Establishment of Industry Standards

Developing design guidelines, safety standards, and environmental certification frameworks increases trust and reduces consumer risk perceptions.

(2) Creation of Public Design Resource Platforms

Shared platforms hosting:

- pattern libraries,
- silhouette databases,
- digital design resources,
- material innovation databases

can improve design efficiency and foster innovation across the industry.

(3) Industry–Academia–Research Collaboration

Partnerships between brands, universities, and research institutions enable:

- culturally grounded design research,
- advanced material development,
- cross-cultural consumer studies.

These collaborations support long-term innovation and global strategic capability.

5. Case Analyses and Practical Implications

5.1 Balabala: Deep Localization in Southeast Asian Markets

Balabala, one of China's leading children's wear brands, demonstrates a comprehensive localization strategy that effectively aligns product offerings and communication approaches with the cultural, religious, and consumer behavior characteristics of Southeast Asian markets. Its experience illustrates how cultural adaptation and market-specific strategies can jointly enhance cross-border competitiveness.

(1) Market Strategy: Cultural Adaptation Through Festival-Oriented Design

Balabala systematically analyzes the unique cultural and religious landscapes of major Southeast Asian markets such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. The brand develops festival-specific collections—including those for Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Songkran—integrating modesty-oriented silhouettes, breathable fabrics, and culturally aligned motifs. This dual strategy of “cultural adaptation + festival marketing” significantly improves resonance among local consumers.

(2) Channel Strategy: Digital-First Engagement and Experiential Retail

The brand adopts an omni-platform strategy:

- Establishing flagship stores on Lazada and Shopee
- Implementing TikTok Shop livestream commerce
- Deploying offline pop-up stores in high-traffic commercial zones

This hybrid model of “online awareness-building + offline experiential verification” enhances trust and

accelerates purchase decisions. Livestream formats featuring try-on demonstrations, parent-child interactions, and cultural storytelling further reinforce user engagement.

(3) Practical Implications

Balabala's experience demonstrates that successful overseas expansion of new Chinese-style children's wear requires:

- deep localization rather than superficial cultural translation,
- fine-grained segmentation aligned with religious and festival cycles,
- ecosystem-based channel orchestration combining social commerce and offline interaction.

This case confirms the importance of culturally embedded product strategies and localized marketing infrastructures for Southeast Asian markets.

5.2 Youlan: Dual Positioning of Sustainability and Cultural Minimalism in Western Markets

Youlan adopts a differentiated brand strategy that aligns with Western consumers' preferences for sustainability, comfort, and minimalist aesthetics. Unlike brands that emphasize ornate traditional motifs, Youlan emphasizes understated reinterpretations that subtly communicate Chinese cultural identity.

(1) Product Strategy: Eco-Friendly Materials and Minimalist Aesthetics

Youlan's brand identity centers around "eco-friendly + comfortable." The brand employs bamboo fiber, organic cotton, and sustainable dyeing processes, aligning itself with growing Western interest in:

- environmentally conscious consumption,
- natural and hypoallergenic materials,
- minimalist and functional design.

Traditional Chinese elements are incorporated through simplified motifs and soft color palettes, avoiding cultural overload and improving cross-cultural acceptance.

(2) Content Strategy: Transparency and Trust Building Through Digital Media

Youlan leverages TikTok and YouTube to produce content that emphasizes:

- material transparency (e.g., fiber origin, production processes),
- craftsmanship demonstrations,
- real-life wearability shared by parenting influencers.

This reinforces authenticity and enhances consumer trust in both quality and cultural sincerity.

(3) Practical Implications

Youlan's success demonstrates that:

- combining universal values (sustainability) with cultural expressiveness significantly reduces cultural discount,
- minimalist reinterpretations can enhance aesthetic compatibility with Western markets,
- content transparency is essential for building trust in global markets increasingly concerned with ethical consumption.

This case highlights the value of cultural minimalism and sustainability-driven branding in high-end Western markets.

5.3 Li Ning Kids: High-End Cultural Branding Through Global Fashion Platforms

Li Ning Kids represents a high-end cultural branding model that leverages global fashion platforms to reconfigure the global perception of Chinese children's wear. Rather than competing solely within the mass market, the brand positions itself as a culturally innovative and fashion-oriented entity.

(1) International Fashion Week Exposure: Cultural Innovation on Global Stages

By showcasing collections at major international fashion events such as New York and Paris Fashion Weeks, Li

Ning Kids presents design narratives that combine:

- Chinese ink-wash aesthetics,
- calligraphic visual elements,
- functional sportswear technologies.

This strategy elevates Chinese cultural imagery from traditional craft-based associations to contemporary, fashion-forward expressions.

(2) Cross-Sector Collaborations and IP-Based Cultural Expansion

The brand collaborates with animation IPs, contemporary artists, and youth culture designers to produce culturally hybrid collections that appeal to young global consumers. These cross-disciplinary collaborations:

- expand brand cultural relevance,
- enhance fashion appeal,
- promote cultural “breakthrough” beyond traditional categorizations.

(3) Practical Implications

The Li Ning Kids case demonstrates that:

- presenting new Chinese-style aesthetics on global fashion stages positions Chinese brands at the forefront of cultural creativity rather than traditionalism;
- cross-sector collaboration can enrich cultural narratives and broaden audience reach;
- high-end cultural branding enables price premium and enhances global symbolic capital.

This case underscores the potential of integrating cultural innovation with fashion-based global communication channels.

5.4 Synthesis of Case Insights

Across the three representative brands, several cross-cutting insights emerge:

(1) Cultural Strategies Must Be Market-Specific

Different regions require distinct cultural translation strategies:

- Southeast Asia → cultural familiarity + festival adaptation
- Western markets → sustainability + minimalist cultural design
- Global fashion markets → high-end cultural innovation

This validates the need for contextualized cultural communication rather than one-size-fits-all approaches.

(2) Digital Platforms Are Central to Cultural Transmission

Successful brands utilize:

- short-video ecosystems,
- livestream commerce,
- influencer networks,
- transparency-centered content.

Digital media not only sells products but also educates consumers and constructs cultural meaning.

(3) Localization Is a Structural Capability, Not a Tactic

Localization is reflected in:

- product design,
- supply chain flexibility,
- language adaptation,
- narrative framing,
- channel orchestration.

Sustained overseas success requires localization to be embedded into the organizational structure rather than executed as isolated marketing efforts.

(4) Cultural Innovation Enhances Brand Premium and Reduces Cultural Discount

By transforming traditional Chinese elements into globally legible design languages, brands can shift consumer perception from “ethnic specialty products” to “high-end cultural fashion,” increasing symbolic capital and pricing power.

6. Conclusion and Future Directions

6.1 Research Conclusions

Drawing upon cultural communication theory, brand internationalization theory, and digital trade theory, this study systematically examined the cultural communication mechanisms and global market expansion pathways of new Chinese-style children’s wear. The major conclusions are as follows:

(1) New Chinese-style children’s wear has become a significant medium of contemporary Chinese cultural export.

By integrating traditional silhouettes, intangible cultural heritage techniques, and modern aesthetic principles, new Chinese-style children’s wear enables cultural meanings to be reencoded and transmitted across cultural boundaries. The domestic market surpassed RMB 1 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach RMB 2 billion by 2025, reflecting its rapid growth and strong cultural-commercial potential.

(2) Cross-border e-commerce serves as a critical infrastructure for global expansion.

In 2023, children’s wear accounted for approximately 25% of China’s cross-border apparel exports, outpacing overall sector growth. Southeast Asia contributes nearly 90% of total exports due to cultural affinity, while Europe and North America—though smaller in scale—offer higher unit prices and strong potential for premium positioning. The rise of platform ecosystems (e.g., TikTok Shop, Shopee, Amazon) accelerates cultural diffusion and commercial scalability.

(3) Cultural communication and brand-building are the core sources of competitive advantage.

Successful cases—such as Balabala, Youlan, and Li Ning Kids—demonstrate that emotional storytelling, localized operations, sustainability alignment, and high-end cultural innovation can effectively reduce cultural discount, enhance symbolic value, and strengthen global brand identity.

(4) Policy frameworks and industry collaboration constitute essential external support.

Governmental measures—such as cross-border trade facilitation, intellectual property protection, and cultural export initiatives—provide foundational support for brand internationalization. Industry-level collaboration, including design standardization, resource-sharing platforms, and industry-academia partnerships, enhances overall sector competitiveness.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions and Practical Implications

(1) Theoretical Contributions

This study makes three main contributions to existing literature:

a. Integration of cultural communication theory with apparel internationalization research

By bridging cultural semiotics with design studies and global marketing theory, the study constructs a cultural symbol–narrative–market adaptation framework tailored to children’s wear, enriching cross-disciplinary research on cultural products.

b. Expansion of brand internationalization theory into the domain of cultural-fashion hybrid goods

Through analysis of differentiated market-entry strategies and localization mechanisms, the study contributes to understanding how culturally embedded products navigate global markets.

c. Advancement of digital trade scholarship through the lens of culturally expressive apparel

The research highlights the roles of short-video ecosystems, livestream commerce, AI-driven customization, and digital storytelling in shaping cross-cultural consumption patterns.

(2) Practical Implications

The findings provide actionable guidance for practitioners:

a. Cultural Symbol Innovation

Brands should build dedicated symbol libraries, apply AR-based interpretive technologies, and develop culturally coherent narratives to enhance cross-cultural meaning-making.

b. Market-Specific Cross-Border Strategies

Different regional markets require distinct operational models:

- Southeast Asia → cultural affinity + festival adaptation
- Europe & U.S. → sustainability + minimalist cultural reinterpretation
- Global fashion markets → high-end cultural branding

c. Technological Empowerment

AI-driven customization (C2M), big-data analytics, and virtual try-on technologies support refined operations, reduce inventory risks, and improve consumer satisfaction.

d. Sustainability as a Value Proposition

Green supply chains, eco-friendly materials, and circular economy models enhance global competitiveness and align with global sustainability norms.

6.3 Research Limitations and Future Prospects

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations:

(1) Limited empirical data

The analysis relies primarily on qualitative methods, including case studies and literature review. Large-scale quantitative data and cross-country surveys are needed to validate the identified patterns.

(2) Absence of a systematic cultural acceptance assessment model

While cultural discount and symbolic misinterpretation are discussed, the study does not construct a comprehensive quantitative model for evaluating cultural acceptance across different regions.

(3) Insufficient differentiation across regional cultural clusters

More granular analyses—such as between Northern vs. Southern Europe, or between Muslim-majority vs. multicultural Southeast Asian markets—could deepen understanding of cultural adaptation mechanisms.

(4) Lack of longitudinal assessment

The study does not evaluate the long-term outcomes of policy interventions or the sustainability of internationalization strategies over time.

6.4 Future Research Directions

Future research may be extended in the following directions:

(1) Development of a global cultural database for new Chinese-style children's wear

Such a database could support design standardization while enabling innovation through structured cultural resources.

(2) Exploration of blockchain and digital governance mechanisms

Technologies such as blockchain could protect design copyrights, support traceability, and reinforce trust within cross-border ecosystems.

(3) Strengthening international educational cooperation

Through cultural workshops, museum collaborations, and children's cultural-exchange programs, the symbolic value of Chinese children's wear can evolve beyond product-level diffusion toward value-level cultural transmission.

(4) Quantitative studies on cross-cultural aesthetic perception

Using surveys, psychometric methods, or eye-tracking experiments, future research can measure how international consumers perceive traditional Chinese motifs, improving data-driven design decisions.

Conclusion: Through cultural empowerment, digital innovation, and strategic adaptation, new Chinese-style children's wear has strong potential to become a prominent medium of contemporary Chinese cultural export. As global consumer interest in cultural diversity, sustainability, and digital-native experiences continues to grow, Chinese children's wear brands are well positioned to achieve both commercial expansion and cultural influence in the international arena.

References

- [1]Jia, X. Z. (2025). From “application of Chinese elements” to “construction of aesthetic system” : Cultural translation path of New Chinese-style clothing design. *Decoration*, (1), 56–61.
- [2]Fang, H. (2024, June 5). Digital trade and innovation in cultural expression. *Guangming Daily*.
- [3]Lu, M. H., & Yu, Z. J. (2024). Exploration and practice of “New Chinese-style” embroidered clothing. *Craftsmanship and Artistry*, (2), 34–38.
- [4]Wang, J. (2025). Enhancing market competitiveness of clothing brands under e-commerce models. *Chemical Fiber and Textile Technology*, (3), 45–49.
- [5]Nie, Y. H. (2024, November 20). Clothing brands rush to go global: Cross-border e-commerce platforms increase support. *Securities Times*.
- [6]Gan, L., et al. (2025). Southeast Asian cross-border e-commerce clothing operation strategy based on cultural adaptation. *Western Leather*, (1), 78–82.
- [7]Modern Silk Science and Technology. (2016). Practical application of traditional cultural elements in modern children’ s clothing design. *Modern Silk Science and Technology*, (4), 23–26.
- [8]Chen, B. J., Chen, J. S., Xiao, J., Qiu, H. Y., & Lie, Y. J. (2019). Export-oriented cross-border social e-commerce model in Southeast Asia: A case study of Foshan specialty children’ s clothing. *International Business & Trade*, (2), 113–118.
- [9]Feng, P. L. (2023). Digital marketing strategy of Chinese cross-border e-commerce enterprises in Southeast Asia: A case study of SHEIN [Doctoral dissertation, Hebei University of Economics and Business].
- [10]Liu, Z. L., & Xiang, C. H. (2025). International marketing strategy and cultural communication of New Chinese-style clothing: Case study of Juzui at New York Fashion Week. *Journal of Hunan International Economics University*, (1), 45–50.
- [11]Originality Documentation. (2025). Ten-year analysis of the children’ s clothing industry in 2025: Multicultural and inclusive design industry report [Report].
- [12]MBA Think Tank Documentation. (2024). Cross-border expansion strategies of Chinese-style children’ s clothing brand stores (2025–2030) [Report].
- [13]Brand Children’ s Clothing Wholesale / Zhili Children’ s Clothing Wholesale. (2025). Panorama of China’ s children’ s clothing foreign trade procurement 2025: From supply chain advantages to global opportunities [Report].
- [14]Sichuan Provincial Department of Economy and Information Technology. (2025). Reply letter on Proposal No. 0741 of the Third Session of the 13th Sichuan Provincial Committee of the Chinese People’ s Political Consultative Conference [Government document].
- [15]Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, et al. (2025). Measures to enhance supply-demand adaptability of consumer goods and further promote consumption [Government document].
- [16]Cheon, B. K., Christopoulos, G. I., & Hong, Y. Y.(2016). Cultural Symbolism and Spatial Separation.*Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 47(10), 1109-1129.
- [17]Yang, D. Y. J., Chen, X., Xu, J., Preston, J. L., & Chiu, C.Y. (2016).Understanding Exclusionary Reactions Toward a Foreign Culture. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 47(10), 1130-1148.
- [18]Shi, Y., Shi, J., Luo, Y. L. L., & Cai, H. (2016).Polycultural Psychology. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 47(10), 1149-1168.
- [19]Morris, M. W., Chiu, C. Y., & Liu, Z. (2015). Brand Concepts as Representations of Human Values: Do Cultural Congruity and Compatibility Between Values Matter? *Annual Review of Psychology*, 66, 249-275.
- [20]Chiu, C. Y., Kwan, L. Y. Y., & Liou, S. (2013).Culturally Motivated Challenges to Innovations in Integrative Research: Theory and Solutions. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, 7(1), 1-28.
- [21]Han, G., & Li, F. (2025). Digital Economy of Trading Partner Countries, Outward Investment, and Cross-Border

E-commerce Exports. Finance Research Letters, 85(Part B), 108034.

[22]Design and Culture. (2023). Design and Culture:The Journal of the Design Studies Forum, 15(1). Taylor & Francis.

[23]Adams, B., & Traganou, J. (Eds.). (2025). Design and Culture: Special Issue on Fashion and Cultural Identity. Taylor & Francis.

[24]Morris, D. (1977). Manwatching: A Field Guide to Human Behavior. Harry N. Abrams.

[25]Hollander, A. (1993). Seeing Through Clothes.University of California Press.

[26]Barnard, M. (2002). Fashion as Communication.Routledge.

[27]Kawamura,Y. (2005). Fashion-ology: AnIntroduction to Fashion Studies. Berg Publishers.

[28]Entwistle, J. (2000). The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory. Polity Press.

[29]Crane, D. (2000). Fashion and Its Social Agendas:Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing. University of Chicago Press.

[30]Wilson, E. (2003). Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity. I.B. Tauris.