

# Research on Brand Building Strategy of Suzhou Embroidery Culture in the Background of Digital Marketing ——Based on the Perspective of SWOT Analysis

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**Abstract.** In the context of rapid digital marketing development, the construction of the Suzhou Embroidery brand faces new challenges as well as opportunities for growth. This study uses SWOT analysis to thoroughly investigate the current state of Suzhou Embroidery, examining its cultural value, market potential, existing limitations, and external strategic opportunities. Suzhou Embroidery, while highly valued for its artistic and cultural significance, struggles with low market recognition, limited production efficiency, and narrow audience reach in today's society. To address these issues, this study proposes a solution centered on branding strategies that enhance Suzhou Embroidery's cultural heritage while adapting to modern market demands. The findings highlight the importance of increasing awareness and appreciation through digital media, optimizing production processes, and expanding the target audience to include younger generations and international consumers. By implementing these strategies, the Suzhou Embroidery brand can better navigate contemporary challenges, ultimately preserving and promoting its cultural legacy in a globalized market.

**Keywords:** digital marketing, Suzhou embroidery culture, brand building, SWOT analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Suzhou Embroidery, as a treasure of traditional Chinese embroidery art, it has a long history. It has become an outstanding representative of Chinese embroidery art with its skilled techniques, delicate methods and unique artistic style. However, with the development of modernization and globalization, traditional culture and crafts are at risk of being forgotten and replaced. To engage the younger generation and the international market with Suzhou Embroidery while preserving its traditional essence, it is essential to explore effective methods that enhance its appeal, so that Suzhou Embroidery can continue to shine in the long river of history. Through searching and combing ancient and modern books and literature, this paper provides sufficient basis and historical information for this research and explores in depth how to use digital marketing tools to help the sustainable development of the culture of Suzhou Embroidery in the context of the new age, and to promote the transformation of Suzhou Embroidery from a traditional handcraft to a brand with modern cultural values. It also uses the SWOT model to specifically analyse the four aspects of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the Suzhou Embroidery brand is currently facing. In addition, it is hoped that this study will provide reference for the digital heritage and brand building of other traditional cultural brands.

## 2. History and Inheritance of Suzhou Embroidery Culture

As one of the four famous embroideries in China, the earliest record of Suzhou Embroidery can be traced back to Liu Xiang's "Saying Yuan" of the Han Dynasty: "Duke Ping of Jin made Shuxiang hire in Wu, and the Wu people swabbed the boat to go against him, with 500 people on the left and 500 people on the right, with embroidered clothes and leopard furs, and brocade clothes and fox furs", which points out that during the Spring and Autumn Period, the nobles began to wear "embroidered clothes" as the starting point. The phrase "embroidered clothes" indicates that embroidery techniques were widely used and valued. As a symbol of nobility and power, "embroidered clothes" contributed to the origin of Suzhou embroidery [1]. Suzhou embroidery is famous for its delicate stitches, rich

colors and vivid patterns. The techniques of flush stitching, flat stitching and messy stitching give the works a delicate sense of layering and richness, showing the unique natural scenery and customs of the Jiangnan region. Suzhou embroidery works are made from a variety of materials, from the totems of gods and monsters in traditional Chinese culture to the flowers and landscapes in the daily life of the people, vividly reproducing the natural beauty and humanistic feelings of the Jiangnan region. Suzhou embroidery is not only the inheritance of skills, but also the continuation of traditional culture. 2006, Suzhou embroidery was included in China's national intangible cultural heritage list, and in 2009, it was further recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of the intangible cultural heritage of mankind, which marks the recognition of the cultural value of this ancient skill on the international stage, and provides an important safeguard for its preservation and inheritance in the future.

### **3. The Internal Logic of Building the Cultural Brand of Suzhou Embroidery in the Context of Digital Marketing**

#### **3.1. Era Background and Brand Positioning**

With the rapid development of traditional culture, the way of selling goods and people's purchasing habits have undergone profound changes. In the past, people mainly purchased through offline channels; however, with the popularity of online platforms and digital marketing tools, people gradually rely on online e-commerce platforms. Especially in China, thanks to the obvious regional agglomeration effect and the strong promotion of the government, the number and diversity of websites continue to grow rapidly. The economy has formed the characteristics of regionalization, mainly from scientific and technological innovation, learning effect and knowledge spillover. Under such an era background of focusing on cultural development and obvious regional characteristics, Suzhou embroidery brand, as a characteristic textile and artwork in Jiangnan, has got a good opportunity for growth [2]. Additionally, this has left traditional culture a little staggered in the rapidly changing society, which has a hard time adapting to online shopping due to its complex skills and vulnerability. However, as the cultural industry, which is closely related to the modernisation of cities, is gradually booming, there is a change in the consumer psychology, they are no longer just concerned about the quality and practicality of the products, but also emphasise and pursue the connotation and emotional resonance behind the products, which is exactly catering to the strengths of traditional culture. Looking around the world, economic globalization has become a major trend with the continuous development of Internet information, and the proportion of cross-border e-commerce in global trade has increased year by year. China's cross-border e-commerce appeared in 2009, more than a decade ago, the current cross-border e-commerce in China's foreign trade stands a pivotal position, in 2022, China's total exports of goods trade cross-border e-commerce accounted for 37.32%, and still showing a growing trend. In this context, Suzhou embroidery can follow the east wind of globalization, break national boundaries, and bring exquisite Suzhou embroidery crafts to all parts of the world [3].

In this context, digital marketing has brought new opportunities for Suzhou embroidery cultural brands. Through social media, short videos, live broadcasting and other platforms, Suzhou embroidery brands are able to cross the boundaries of time and space, and quickly reach their target consumer groups. The audience of the Suzhou embroidery brand can be expanded to include culture enthusiasts, consumers in the luxury gift market, and even the younger generation who are full of curiosity and the need for individual expression. By clarifying and unifying the brand positioning and emphasizing the deep cultural heritage of Suzhou embroidery, the brand is able to build a bond between business and culture while conveying traditional cultural values, laying the foundation for the sustainable development of Suzhou embroidery culture. Brand building in this era is not only the expansion of commercialization, but also the regeneration and renewal of traditional culture in modern society.

## **3.2. Brand Building Strategy**

### **3.2.1. Multi-channel marketing Communication**

This is a key strategy to increase brand awareness. Through the combination of search engine optimization (SEO), display advertising and social media platforms, the Suzhou embroidery brand is able to achieve precise marketing on different channels. It is very important that a unified visual style and brand voice are needed in multi-channel marketing communication so that Su embroidery can form a consistent image in the minds of consumers, making the brand more recognizable and increasing consumer recognition of it.

### **3.2.2. Storytelling**

Storytelling is an essential part of establishing a deep emotional connection with consumers. As one of China's traditional embroidery arts, Suzhou embroidery has a rich cultural history and artistic value behind it. Through content marketing, brands can tell the history, origins, and unique techniques used in the production process of Suzhou embroidery, and even focus on the stories of embroiderers and artists to give consumers a more direct understanding of the essence of this art form. For example, a series of short videos or graphic profiles can be produced to show the process of creating a piece of Su embroidery, or to tell the experiences of artists who have worked hard to passing the skill on. In this way, the brand is not only selling products, but also conveying the emotion of a culture, so that consumers feel the unique charm of the art of Su embroidery, thus stimulating their emotional identity and desire to buy.

### **3.2.3. Offline Interaction**

In order to further enhance the brand's influence and consumer participation, the Suzhou embroidery brand can combine the offline interactive experience with online marketing. For instance, in Gucci Spring 2023 Twinsburg's twin model show, designer Michele used the techniques of Suzhou embroidery, using cheongsams, disc buttons and other elements to create a combination of delicate embroidery techniques and the use of modern machine embroidery technology, bringing a three-dimensional and bold visual effect. The culture of Suzhou embroidery can be greatly promoted through the offline publicity of such well-known brands. In addition, brands can also offer embroidery courses, allowing consumers to experience the charm of embroidery production under the guidance of professional technicians, and collect their feedback during the experience for further optimisation.

## **4. SWOT Analysis of the Culture Brand Building of Suzhou Embroidery**

### **4.1. Strength**

#### **4.1.1. Cultural Value**

Suzhou embroidery, with a history of more than 2,000 years, has a deep cultural background that gives it a very high artistic and cultural value. Suzhou embroidery works are often based on the theme of Jiangnan landscape, birds and flowers, and people, showing the unique natural scenery and humanistic customs of the Jiangnan region. For example, the "Jiangnan Water Town" pattern, which is common in Su embroidery works, depicts the typical water town scenery and vividly shows the idyllic scenery and gentle attitude towards life in Jiangnan. These works are not only decorations, but also a transmitter of Jiangnan culture, carrying rich historical stories and regional characteristics.

#### **4.1.2. Artistic style**

The unique artistic style of Suzhou embroidery is especially reflected in the embroidery techniques. Suzhou embroidery is famous for its fine needlework and three-dimensional sense, especially the "underlining embroidery", which makes the pattern show a unique sense of hierarchy and three-dimensional effect through the underlining method. As an example, in the flower and bird patterns in Suzhou embroidery, the embroiderer will express the petals, bird feathers and other parts of the flower in a vivid and realistic way, as if they are going to fly out of the canvas. Su embroidery also has the

advantage of personalized design, many consumers can customize their patterns and styles according to their personal preferences, and this customized service meets consumers' demand for uniqueness and personalization, which has become one of the competitiveness of Suzhou embroidery.

## **4.2. Weaknesses**

### **4.2.1. Low reputation**

Despite its reputation in the art field, the popularity of Su embroidery is still low in the wider market. By way of example, although Suzhou embroidery has been adopted by some high-end brands such as "Suzhou Embroidery Dream" and "Embroidery Workshop", the market positioning of these brands is too niche and limited to certain specific groups, and they have not gained sufficient recognition and influence in the mainstream market.

### **4.2.2. Ambiguous brand positioning**

Inconsistent positioning of Suzhou embroidery on different platforms is also a major problem. Some position Suzhou embroidery as a luxury product, such as some luxury gift shops with expensive Suzhou embroidery products, focusing on art collection; while some adopt a low-priced retail strategy on e-commerce platforms, which leads to the confusion of the perception of Suzhou embroidery in the market and affects the unity of the brand image.

### **4.2.3. Insufficient technology and innovation**

The complexity of the technique of Su embroidery makes it difficult to carry out mass production. This means that although each piece of embroidery is highly artistic, it cannot be mass-produced due to the time-consuming process and the need for highly skilled craftsmen, thus limiting its market expansion and popularity. For example, a delicate "flower and bird" piece can take months to complete, making it difficult to supply products to meet rapidly changing market demand. Moreover, the current design and pattern of Suzhou embroidery are mostly based on traditional themes, with fewer innovations, failing to combine well with modern aesthetic trends. The younger generation of consumers prefers simple and modern design styles, while the traditional embroidery patterns appear to be more ancient, making it difficult to attract the attention of trendy and young consumers.

### **4.2.4. Lack of inheritors to protect and inherit Suzhou embroidery**

With the development of the easy-going era, the traditional environment in which Suzhou embroidery flourished in the past has changed, and the inheritors and audiences have become less and less. Contemporary Suzhou embroidery is faced with severe problems of inheritance and development. At the same time, most academic studies on embroidery focus on the historical changes and development of embroidery as well as embroidery techniques and skills, but few scholars pay enough attention to the protection and inheritance of embroidery, and few pay enough attention to the protection of traditional embroidery. Therefore, how to protect and inherit the existing Suzhou embroidery has become an issue that contemporary scholars must consider [4].

## **4.3. Opportunity**

### **4.3.1. Government Support**

Suzhou embroidery has received strong support from the government in recent years. 2006, Suzhou embroidery was listed on China's national intangible cultural heritage list, and the government has continuously introduced policies to protect and pass on this traditional skill. In the "14th Five-Year Plan", it is especially proposed that the government should put protection in the first place and promote the investigation and systematic protection of cultural heritage resources. Development in protection, protection in development. This also reflects the national government's support for the protection and inheritance of traditional culture. The support of relevant preferential policies enables Suzhou embroidery to display its cultural value and artistic charm on a larger stage [5].

### **4.3.2. Technological development**

With the development of social media and e-commerce platforms, information spreads extremely fast and market coverage becomes extensive. For example, platforms such as Jieyin and Xiaohongshu have become an important position for the display and promotion of Suzhou embroidery. Through the spread of social platforms, more and more young consumers are beginning to understand the beauty and uniqueness of Suzhou embroidery. In addition, e-commerce platforms such as Taobao and Jingdong also provide a larger market space for Suzhou embroidery, breaking through the limitations of the traditional sales model and enabling consumers to easily buy Suzhou embroidery products online.

### **4.3.3. Consumption upgrade and change**

With the improvement of social consumption level, consumers' consumption concepts have changed. Modern consumers pay more and more attention to the connotation and cultural value of products, not just price and practicality. Suzhou embroidery, as a traditional craft with deep cultural heritage, caters to this trend. In recent years, as environmental protection, personalization and cultural value have become the keywords of consumption, the cultural value and artistry of Su embroidery have gradually been recognized by more young consumers.

## **4.4. Threat**

### **4.4.1. Intense competition**

In the current market environment, Suzhou embroidery is facing fierce competition as consumer products are being updated at a faster pace. As the market is rapidly dominated by a variety of trendy brands and modern designs, traditional embroidery seems to be a bit "old-fashioned" and does not fully meet the aesthetics of the younger generation. The rise of trendy brands and fast-fashion brands has brought pressure on traditional handicrafts, and it has become a difficult problem for Suzhou embroidery to occupy a place in the fierce competition.

### **4.4.2. Inheritance crisis**

Due to the extremely high requirements of Suzhou embroidery skills, the inheritance of traditional crafts is facing serious challenges. As young people's interest in the craft wanes, the group of heirs gradually shrinks. For example, many Suzhou embroidery artisans are old and the younger generation is not willing to take over the craft. The complexity of the craft and the long learning process have made many young people fearful of this traditional craft, leading to an intensification of the inheritance crisis.

### **4.4.3. Cultural identity**

The process of globalization has led to a gradual fusion of cultures around the world, with Chinese and Western cultures influencing each other through exchanges. Although this process has brought about cultural diversity, it has also led to a weakening of the sense of identity of traditional culture in the wave of globalization. Especially among the younger generation, the attraction of traditional culture has gradually declined, and they are more inclined to accept Western popular culture, while neglecting the traditional arts and crafts of their own countries, and thus Su embroidery is facing a crisis of cultural identity.

## **5. Conceptualisation of Suzhou Embroidery Cultural Branding Strategy in the Context of Digital Marketing**

### **5.1. SO Strategy**

#### **5.1.1. Building a characteristic brand image in the context of digital marketing**

The delicate skills of Suzhou embroidery and the unique Jiangnan embroidery theme are the key factors for building the Suzhou embroidery brand. The shaping of brand image can be more three-

dimensional and flexible in the context of digital marketing. Through precise advertising, social media crowd portrait operation and search engine optimization, the Suzhou embroidery brand can deliver distinctive brand symbols and values to the audience.

### **5.1.2. Storytelling**

Digital marketing provides a wealth of communication channels, and brands can enhance consumers' recognition of their cultural values by telling the origin of Suzhou embroidery, the story of the artist and the production process. For example, social media and short video platforms (e.g., Jieyin, Xiaohongshu) are used to spread cultural stories and attract the attention of young groups. In addition, artworks and the production process of Su embroidery can be displayed through a combination of online and offline methods to enhance consumers' awareness and interest in the brand.

### **5.1.3. Expand new scenes of digital consumption and innovative applications**

As consumer demand for personalized products increases, Suzhou embroidery brands can launch customised and personalized embroidery works. Through the means of materialisation, abstract cultural values and humanistic spirit can be projected into concrete products. Currently, Suzhou embroidery products have been derived from home accessories and customised gifts. Combining modern design elements and traditional embroidery techniques, they create customised products with both cultural values and modern aesthetics to meet consumer demand for uniqueness and personalization. For example, Suzhou Jiao Gu Su Embroidery Art Co., Ltd. and other enterprises produce Suzhou embroidery gifts, decorative paintings, and even involved in the production of large-scale Su embroidery screen, which have made a positive contribution to the inheritance and development of the art of Suzhou embroidery.

## **5.2. WO Strategy**

### **5.2.1. Improve market awareness**

The market awareness of Suzhou embroidery is still low, especially among young groups. To make up for this, the brand can unite with famous Su embroidery artists or invite them to participate in art fairs, exhibitions and other activities, leveraging the influence and expertise of the artists to enhance brand exposure. In addition, the brand can co-operate with other famous brands or influencers and use their market influence to expand the dissemination range and market awareness of the Suzhou embroidery brand. Through cooperation and promotion, more consumers can be made aware of the cultural value and artistic charm of Suzhou embroidery.

### **5.2.2. Optimise the production process and improve efficiency**

The production process of Suzhou embroidery is complex and difficult to achieve large-scale production, so the brand faces the problem of high production costs. In order to solve this problem, the brand can introduce modern equipment, such as automated embroidery machines and production lines, to improve production efficiency and reduce production costs. At the same time, supply chain management is strengthened to reduce unnecessary costs through accurate inventory management and transport optimization, thus enhancing overall operational efficiency.

## **5.3. ST Strategy**

As one of the Four Famous Embroideries, the artistic value and cultural heritage of Suzhou embroidery provides a strong competitive advantage for the brand. In the face of fierce competition from other traditional crafts, the Suzhou embroidery brand can highlight differentiation by reinforcing its unique artistic style and historical culture. For example, it can emphasise the uniqueness of its techniques, such as the three-dimensionality and layering brought about by the "underlining embroidery method", or display some works with deep cultural symbolism. Through such branding, it can avoid confusion with other common handicrafts and consolidate the unique position of Suzhou embroidery in the market.

## 5.4. WT Strategy

### 5.4.1. Flexible adjustment of product and market positioning

Market demand and consumer preferences are constantly changing, so Suzhou embroidery brands need to conduct regular market research to collect consumer feedback and understand the latest needs of the target group. This helps brands to adjust their products and marketing strategies in a timely manner to ensure that their market share is not affected by external changes. For example, if consumer preferences change, the brand should flexibly adjust the style, price or channel of the product to avoid missing opportunities due to improper market positioning.

### 5.4.2. Reduce costs and improve efficiency

One of the challenges facing Suzhou embroidery is the high cost of production and the intense competition in the market. In order to maintain an edge in competition, Suzhou embroidery brands can improve production efficiency and reduce costs by optimising production processes, strengthening supply chain management or even introducing artificial intelligence technology. At the same time, brands can improve the cost-effectiveness of their products and enhance their competitiveness in the market by cooperating with other brands and increasing the added value of their products. By reducing costs and improving efficiency, brands are able to maintain a sustained competitive advantage in a fiercely competitive market.

## 6. Conclusion

As an important intangible cultural heritage in China, the protection and inheritance of Suzhou embroidery has received more and more attention from people from all walks of life. However, at present, the protection and inheritance of the art of Suzhou embroidery are mostly superficial, and there are still many deficiencies. Based on the SWOT analysis of Suzhou embroidery brand construction, this paper objectively disassembles the Suzhou embroidery brand from multiple latitudes, and summarises the many possibilities for the development of the Suzhou embroidery brand by combining the advantages, disadvantages and threats. A series of brand building strategies adapted to the digital trend are proposed. The Suzhou embroidery brand construction enabled by digital marketing can not only better adapt to the trend of consumption upgrading and personalised customization demand, but also enhance the cultural dissemination and brand competitiveness of Suzhou embroidery, and provide a sustainable development path for the inheritance and innovation of Suzhou embroidery, a traditional handicraft. This study provides practical knowledge for the brand construction of Suzhou embroidery in today's era of rapid technological progress, and also provides a useful reference for the digital transformation of other traditional cultural brands.

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