

Integrating Dai Ethnic Cultural Elements into Contemporary Hotel Space Design: A Case Study of the Anantara Resort Xishuangbanna

Chenyang Yi *

School of Art and Design, Wuhan Textile University, Wuhan Hubei, 430073, China

* Corresponding author Email: 958977912@qq.com

Abstract: This study explores the integration of Dai ethnic cultural elements into contemporary hotel space design, taking the Anantara Resort Xishuangbanna as a representative case. With the rapid growth of cultural tourism, the combination of ethnic cultural heritage and spatial design has become a key strategy for enhancing the uniqueness and competitiveness of hotels. The research focuses on how Dai cultural symbols—such as bamboo structures, traditional patterns, natural color palettes, and courtyard spatial layouts—can be incorporated into modern hotel spaces to create immersive cultural experiences while maintaining comfort and functionality. The methodology integrates literature analysis, field investigation, and comparative evaluation of design strategies. Findings indicate that the creative use of local materials, the reinterpretation of traditional motifs, and the application of sustainable design principles contribute to a harmonious relationship between culture, environment, and architecture. This paper concludes with design strategies and a practical framework for applying Dai cultural elements in modern hotel design, offering theoretical and practical guidance for future cultural-oriented hospitality projects.

Keywords: Dai Ethnic Culture; Hotel Space Design; Cultural Integration; Tourism Experience; Spatial Innovation.

1. Introduction

With the development of cultural tourism, the integration of ethnic culture into hotel design has become an effective way to enhance cultural identity and improve user experience. Dai culture, as one of China's most distinctive ethnic heritages, is characterized by its tropical environment, wooden architecture, and harmonious coexistence with nature. The Xishuangbanna region, rich in Dai traditions, provides a suitable context for exploring cultural integration in hotel design. This research aims to examine how traditional Dai elements can be reinterpreted within contemporary hotel space design to achieve both cultural preservation and modern comfort.[1]

2. Literature Review

Research on ethnic culture and hospitality design has evolved toward emphasizing authenticity and experiential depth. In China, scholars such as Li Yuqi (2022) and Wang Lei (2021) highlight the role of cultural symbolism in creating meaningful spaces. Internationally, studies on cross-cultural design underline the balance between local expression and global hospitality standards. However, few studies systematically summarize the interaction between ethnic cultural elements and spatial innovation, particularly in the context of Dai culture. This paper seeks to fill this research gap by offering a design-based case analysis.[2]

3. Methodology

This research employs qualitative methods combining literature review, field investigation, and expert interviews. Field data were collected from the Anantara Resort Xishuangbanna and surrounding Dai villages to understand architectural typologies, material usage, and cultural patterns. The study also incorporates comparative analysis to identify

similarities and differences between traditional Dai dwellings and modern hotel spaces. The integration framework was constructed to evaluate how cultural elements can be transformed into spatial design strategies. [3]

The study organizes cultural-spatial integration as a five-step sequence: (1) identify Dai cultural elements (bamboo weaving, stilt-house prototype, peacock/water motifs, and a natural color palette); (2) extract their operative logic (e.g., structure → interface, pattern → geometry, craft → detail); (3) translate the logic into design strategies for material systems, spatial sequences, light and ventilation, and craft detailing; (4) deploy the strategies across space types (lobby, guestroom, public corridor, semi-outdoor gray space); and (5) evaluate outcomes along three axes—regional identity, comfort and efficiency, and sustainability/maintenance. [4]

4. Case Study: Anantara Resort Xishuangbanna

The Anantara Resort Xishuangbanna, located in a tropical rainforest environment, embodies the essence of Dai culture through its architectural forms and spatial organization. The resort adopts elevated wooden structures and open courtyards resembling traditional Dai stilt houses. The design integrates natural ventilation, local bamboo and teak materials, and decorative patterns derived from Dai folklore. [5]

In the lobby, bamboo weaving functions as semi-transparent screens and ceiling panels that guide queuing while improving airflow; the stilt-house prototype is translated into a shallow, shaded arrival platform and a dry-wet threshold; a framed courtyard axis anchors wayfinding and daylight. In the guestroom, bamboo appears as headboard inserts, lampshades, and wardrobe infills; a short vestibule step-up borrows the privacy logic of raised floors; a private balcony (micro-courtyard) provides a gray zone for rest and cross-ventilation. Peacock and water motifs are geometrically abstracted into rugs, metal pulls, and soft furnishings rather

than heavy reliefs to ease maintenance. The natural palette (wood/earth/leaf tones) is calibrated with lighting to control glare by matte stone floors and low-saturation wall finishes. These moves collectively deliver cultural legibility with maintainable detailing.[6]

5. Results and Discussion

The analysis reveals that the integration of Dai cultural elements enhances both the aesthetic and emotional experience of hotel guests. Three main findings emerge: (1) the reinterpretation of traditional symbols through modern materials strengthens cultural identity; (2) the courtyard-based spatial layout fosters social interaction and relaxation; and (3) natural material palettes promote sustainable and regionally grounded design. These strategies not only preserve local culture but also align with contemporary tourism trends emphasizing authenticity and ecological sensitivity. Design Implications and Evaluation Metrics. To prevent “thematic overload” and to keep cultural expression serviceable, the project adopts a one–one–one–one rule: select one structural prototype to organize hierarchy (e.g., the stilt-house platform); one dominant craft to ensure material continuity (bamboo weaving); one experiential anchor in the lobby (a framed courtyard axis); and one privacy device in the guestroom (a short vestibule step-up). Building on this rule, a compact set of metrics links culture with operations: (a) cultural legibility along the arrival–lobby–guestroom sequence, assessed by user recall of two or more Dai cues; (b) wayfinding clarity, measured by mean decision points ≤ 3 from entrance to room; (c) peak-hour reception throughput (guests processed per 15 minutes); (d) housekeeping turnaround time for a standard room; and (e) night-time acoustic comfort ($L_{Aeq} \leq 35$ dB inside rooms). These indicators are lightweight enough for post-occupancy evaluation and provide evidence for future refinement.[7]

6. Limitations and Future Work

This single-case study focuses on a rainforest climate and a resort typology; transferability to business hotels in temperate cities requires further testing. Quantitative user studies (e.g., controlled A/B evaluations of lobby sequencing) and digital simulations for daylight, airflow, and acoustic performance would strengthen the causal link between cultural cues and comfort. Future work will expand the dataset to multiple Dai-culture projects and compare them with other minority-culture hotels to develop a more generalizable cultural–spatial toolkit.[8]

The lobby sequence shows how a culturally framed axis can serve both narrative and logistics. Guests transition from a shaded semi-outdoor porch into a double-height hall where the exposed roof truss recalls the tectonics of stilt houses. Seating clusters are arranged to keep the visual corridor to the courtyard unobstructed, while the low reception desk reduces the barrier between staff and guests. This order shortens decision time at arrival and reduces cross-flows with groups waiting for transport. The framed courtyard view also stabilizes the luminous environment, lowering contrast and glare during daytime check-in.

Guestrooms reinterpret the raised-floor prototype through a short step-up vestibule that buffers sound and creates a clear threshold. The micro-courtyard balcony works as a gray zone for cross-ventilation in the shoulder seasons and for private outdoor occupation at night. Built-in furniture integrates

woven-bamboo panels at touchable height to emphasize craft without interfering with the structural system. Lighting is organized as three layers: low-level guidance near the vestibule, diffuse general light via ceiling wash, and local task light at headboard and desk. Together these moves align cultural cues with comfort and maintenance. Design Guidelines for Lobby and Guestroom.

(1) Organize the lobby around one experiential anchor such as a framed courtyard axis; maintain at least two direct sightlines to daylight to prevent back-of-house spill glare.

(2) Provide a shaded, semi-outdoor arrival porch so groups can stage before check-in; size the porch for peak dwell time observed in site counts.

(3) Keep a clear service loop for front-of-house and housekeeping carts to avoid interference at the elevator core; target ≤ 3 decision points from entrance to room.

(4) In guestrooms, create a 1.2–1.5 m vestibule step-up for privacy and acoustics.

(5) Reserve a micro-courtyard/balcony or an operable screen for natural ventilation; specify insect screens in rainforest settings.

(6) Use bamboo weaving as screen/ceiling/door infill where it can be touched and maintained; avoid placing fragile craft in high-impact corners.

(7) Calibrate a natural palette (wood/earth/leaf tones) with matte stone floors to control glare; combine with low-saturation wall finishes for night comfort.

(8) Translate peacock/water motifs into low-relief metal pulls, textiles and rugs rather than heavy wall reliefs to ease cleaning and durability.

(9) Provide standardized detailing packages (corner protection, removable panels, leveling tolerances) so cultural elements remain serviceable over time.

To avoid “thematic overload” while keeping cultural expression legible, the project adopts a one–one–one–one rule: select one structural prototype to organize hierarchy (e.g., the stilt-house platform); one dominant craft to ensure material continuity (bamboo weaving); one experiential anchor in the lobby (a framed courtyard axis); and one privacy device in the guestroom (a short vestibule step-up). Building on this rule, a compact set of metrics links culture with operations:

- Cultural legibility along the arrival–lobby–guestroom sequence, assessed by guest recall of two or more Dai cues at check-out;

- Wayfinding clarity, measured by mean decision points from entrance to room (target ≤ 3) and by observed error rate during peak hours;

- Reception throughput (guests processed per 15 minutes) and queue length under 90th-percentile demand;

- Housekeeping turnaround time for a standard room, recorded over one week in high season;

- Night-time acoustic comfort inside rooms (target $L_{Aeq} \leq 35$ dB).

These indicators are lightweight enough for post-occupancy evaluation and provide evidence for design refinement.

The POE combines short guest interviews (≤ 3 minutes at check-out), staff logs, and spatial observation. A ten-item questionnaire tests cultural legibility, perceived comfort, and wayfinding ease. Staff record reception throughput every 15 minutes during peak hours and housekeeping turnaround per room type. Spatial observers map pedestrian traces in the lobby to confirm that the framed axis reduces crossing flows. Results are compared against pre-defined thresholds and fed

back into maintenance and seasonal operation plans.

Bamboo components should use laminated or strand-woven products with clear coating; panel modules must be removable for periodic cleaning. Timber species with stable moisture behavior are recommended for reception desks and trims; edges exposed to luggage impact receive hidden corner guards. Stone floors shall be matte finished to reduce glare and slip risk in humid conditions. Textile selections must be lightfast and washable; metal pulls may carry abstracted water or peacock motifs using low-relief machining rather than deep carving. Typical sections should include vented cavities under raised platforms, insect-screen details at balcony doors, and stainless fixings in areas subject to condensation.

7. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that integrating Dai ethnic cultural elements into hotel space design can effectively balance tradition and modernity, fostering a deeper cultural connection for travelers. By emphasizing natural materials, local craftsmanship, and symbolic patterns, designers can create immersive cultural spaces that reflect regional identity. The case of Anantara Resort Xishuangbanna illustrates how cultural and spatial integration contributes to both aesthetic and sustainable development. Future research should expand on quantitative evaluations of user satisfaction and explore digital simulation techniques for cultural space design.

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