

# A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF VISUAL ELEMENTS IN LACQUERWARE AND CONSUMER PERCEIVED VALUE

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(Received 05<sup>th</sup> February 2026; revised 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026; accepted 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026)

**Abstract.** This systematic review explores the impact of visual elements in lacquerware on consumer perceived value and acceptance. This study adopts a systematic review methodology guided by the PRISMA framework to ensure rigor and transparency. Literature was retrieved from the Scopus database using structured keyword clusters related to lacquerware, visual design features, and consumer responses. After screening 327 records, 42 eligible studies were selected based on defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Key data items, such as visual elements, perceived value dimensions, and consumer acceptance indicators, were extracted using a coding matrix. This review finds that visual elements in lacquerware, such as color, motif, texture, and gloss, significantly shape consumer perceptions of aesthetic, emotional, and cultural value, which in turn influence acceptance. These elements act as symbolic cues, evoking heritage, identity, and status, with responses varying by cultural context. The review illustrates how these values influence consumer acceptance across cultural contexts. Practical implications include design innovation and localized marketing to align with evolving consumer preferences. The review contributes to theories of symbolic consumption, cultural product design, and visual aesthetics.

**Keywords:** *consumer perceived value, lacquerware, systematic review, visual elements*

## Introduction

Lacquerware, a traditional craft form renowned for its intricate decorative techniques and rich cultural symbolism, holds a distinctive place in the heritage of East and Southeast Asia (Rao et al., 2024). Historically, lacquerware has been used in religious ceremonies, imperial courts, and daily life, symbolizing status, refinement, and cultural identity (Suo and Noknoi, 2025). The production process is complex, often involving the application of numerous layers of natural lacquer, combined with inlays of mother-of-pearl, gold leaf, or eggshell, and finalized with a polished finish that produces a deep, radiant luster (Jin, 2024). In recent years, lacquerware has undergone a revival, driven by both cultural preservation efforts and global consumer demand for unique, handcrafted products. Governments, artisans, and design enterprises are reimagining lacquerware as a contemporary lifestyle commodity, integrating modern aesthetics and functional features to appeal to new generations. Within this transformation, visual elements, such as color palettes, motifs, textures, and gloss, have emerged as critical drivers influencing consumer perception, emotional engagement, and purchasing behavior.

Visual design plays a central role in consumer decision-making, especially during the initial stages of product evaluation (Boardman and McCormick, 2019; Lin et al., 2012). For lacquerware, these visual cues not only attract attention but also convey meanings related to craftsmanship, regional heritage, and social symbolism. As a culturally embedded art form, lacquerware offers a unique lens through which to examine how aesthetic features shape consumer value perception and acceptance. Consumer psychology has long emphasized the importance of perceived value as a driver of

purchase decisions (Baca and Reshidi, 2025; Ng et al., 2024). Perceived value refers to the consumer's overall assessment of a product's utility based on what is received versus what is given (Xu et al., 2024). This construct is multidimensional, comprising functional value (performance and utility), emotional value (pleasure and affect), social value (status and recognition), and epistemic value (novelty and curiosity). Visual elements can affect all these dimensions, for example, by signaling product quality (functional), evoking aesthetic pleasure (emotional), or conveying cultural sophistication (social). Another relevant concept is consumer acceptance, which extends beyond the point of purchase. Acceptance involves a deeper level of integration into the consumer's identity, lifestyle, and cultural orientation (Cherrier and Murray, 2007; Frewer et al., 2003). For traditional artifacts such as lacquerware, consumer acceptance may reflect not only aesthetic appreciation but also a sense of cultural resonance, personal meaning, and symbolic alignment. Visual elements serve as the bridge connecting these product characteristics with consumer cognition and emotion.

Although existing research in consumer behavior has extensively examined the role of visual design in product evaluation, such studies largely focus on mass-produced goods such as fashion, electronics, and industrial products. Scholarship on lacquerware, by contrast, has concentrated on its historical evolution, artistic techniques, and preservation strategies, with little integration of consumer perception research. This disciplinary separation leaves a gap in understanding how the visual characteristics of lacquerware influence perceived value and acceptance. Handcrafted cultural products differ significantly from industrial goods in their symbolic value, artisanal labor, and cultural narratives, which demand more nuanced analytical frameworks. Moreover, as lacquerware enters global markets, it becomes important to understand how its traditional visual codes, such as red-and-gold tones, floral patterns, and high-gloss finishes; are interpreted in different cultural contexts. Do these elements universally enhance perceived quality, or might they be interpreted differently across aesthetic traditions? A systematic review addressing this gap can consolidate scattered findings and provide theoretical insights into the pathways linking lacquerware's visual elements with consumer cognition, emotion, and behavior.

This review draws upon multiple theoretical perspectives to guide the analysis of how lacquerware's visual features shape consumer responses: (1) Perceived Value Theory – Explains how consumers evaluate products through multidimensional value constructs, including functional (utility and performance), emotional (pleasure and affect), cultural (heritage and tradition), and symbolic (status and identity) dimensions. In lacquerware, visual cues such as meticulous patterning or deep gloss may signal quality (functional), evoke aesthetic pleasure (emotional), and convey cultural sophistication (symbolic); (2) Aesthetic Theory in Consumer Research – Positions visual appeal as a core determinant of product evaluation and emotional engagement, suggesting that form, harmony, and sensory richness directly influence consumer preference; (3) Symbolic Consumption Theory-Highlights how consumers use products to express identity, heritage, and social status. Lacquerware's motifs and color symbolism often communicate meanings that resonate with personal or cultural identity; (4) Visual-Value-Behavior (VVB) Model-Offers an integrative framework linking visual stimuli to perceived value and, subsequently, to behavioral intentions such as purchase, recommendation, or long-term adoption; (5) Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) Model – Explains how environmental stimuli (e.g., visual elements) affect

internal psychological states (e.g., perceptions, emotions) that, in turn, lead to observable behavioral outcomes.

### ***Research questions***

This systematic review aims to bridge fragmented research findings by synthesizing existing literature on the visual characteristics of lacquerware and their influence on consumer perceived value and acceptance. By doing so, the study contributes to the intersection of cultural product design, consumer psychology, and marketing strategy. The review is guided by the following research questions:

- Q1. What are the key visual elements identified in lacquerware across the literature?
- Q2. How do these visual attributes influence the different dimensions of consumer perceived value?
- Q3. What are the pathways through which visual elements affect consumer acceptance of lacquerware?

### **Materials and Methods**

This study outlines the systematic methodology employed to collect, screen, analyze, and synthesize the relevant literature on visual elements in lacquerware and their influence on consumer perceived value and acceptance. The approach was guided by the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework (O'Dea et al., 2021; Moher et al., 2010), which ensures methodological rigor, transparency, and reproducibility.

#### ***Analysis technique: PRISMA framework***

To ensure transparency, replicability, and methodological rigor in this systematic review, the PRISMA framework was employed as the guiding standard for the research process. PRISMA is widely recognized in the fields of health sciences and social sciences for its effectiveness in organizing literature-based studies, and it is increasingly used in interdisciplinary research involving design, cultural studies, and consumer behavior (Page et al., 2021). The PRISMA methodology consists of four critical stages: Identification, Screening, Eligibility, and Inclusion. During the Identification stage, the research scope was clarified, and relevant keywords and search terms were designed. The Screening phase involved the removal of duplicate or clearly irrelevant records based on titles and abstracts. In the Eligibility phase, full-text articles were assessed based on well-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The final Inclusion stage led to the selection of studies that met both conceptual and methodological requirements for the review. The use of PRISMA ensured that the review process remained systematic and free from selection bias, while also allowing the synthesis of diverse types of evidence, such as theoretical models, empirical surveys, and qualitative interviews.

#### ***Resources and search strategy***

Given the multidisciplinary nature of this study, at the intersection of design aesthetics, consumer psychology, and material culture, the Scopus database was selected as the primary source for literature retrieval. Scopus provides access to a vast range of peer-reviewed journals and conference proceedings across multiple academic

domains, including design studies, marketing, anthropology, cultural heritage, and behavioral science (Miguel et al., 2011). The search strategy was developed using Boolean logic to ensure a balance between breadth and specificity. Keywords were grouped into three thematic clusters: (1) Craft Medium Terms: “lacquerware”, “traditional lacquer art”, “lacquer craft”; (2) Visual Design Features: “visual design”, “motif”, “color”, “texture”, “symbol”, “pattern”, “materiality”; (3) Consumer Response Variables: “perceived value”, “aesthetic evaluation”, “consumer acceptance”, “emotional response”. The search was limited to peer-reviewed publications from January 2000 to December 2024 in either English or Chinese (with English abstracts). Non-peer-reviewed materials such as trade magazines, news articles, and visual catalogs were excluded to maintain academic rigor.

### ***Data collection and eligibility criteria***

After initial identification, a total of 327 records were retrieved from Scopus. The titles and abstracts of these records were screened to eliminate duplicate entries and studies clearly unrelated to lacquerware or consumer behavior. This yielded 116 articles for full-text assessment. Studies were included if they met the following criteria: (1) Focused explicitly on lacquerware or traditional lacquer objects from East Asia or other cultural regions; (2) Contained a detailed description or analysis of visual elements such as color, texture, surface treatment, or symbolic motifs; (3) Investigated or discussed consumer-related variables, particularly perceived value (e.g., aesthetic, cultural, emotional) or behavioral responses (e.g., purchasing intention, acceptance); (4) Employed empirical research designs (e.g., surveys, experiments, interviews) or offered conceptual frameworks relevant to design evaluation or perception. Exclusion criteria eliminated papers that focused purely on manufacturing processes, material chemistry, conservation science, or historical documentation without engaging with consumer interpretation or value creation. After applying these criteria, 42 studies were selected for inclusion in the final analysis and thematic coding. This carefully defined inclusion/exclusion strategy helped ensure that the synthesized literature directly addressed the research objective: understanding how visual elements in lacquerware shape consumer perceived value and acceptance.

### ***Data items***

In order to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness in the data extraction process, this study developed a structured data extraction matrix (Afifi et al., 2023). The primary data items extracted from each eligible study included: publication details, research methods, country or cultural context, type and description of lacquerware, visual elements discussed, dimensions of consumer perceived value (e.g., aesthetic, emotional, cultural), and consumer acceptance indicators (e.g., purchase intention, behavioral intention, subjective evaluation). To facilitate thematic coding, all included data items were categorized into three major groups: Visual Attributes, Perceived Value Dimensions, and Consumer Acceptance Variables. NVivo 12 software was used to code these items and to identify co-occurrence patterns, allowing for a more systematic mapping of how specific visual elements (such as color, motif, texture, and gloss) correlate with perceived value constructs (e.g., beauty, uniqueness, cultural symbolism) and behavioral responses. Additionally, the study captured contextual variables such as the year of publication, research discipline, and methodological approach (qualitative,

quantitative, or mixed-methods). This allowed for a secondary layer of analysis regarding how the perception of lacquerware aesthetics may differ across disciplines and regions, and how methodological trends influence the interpretation of consumer responses. The *Table 1* summarizes the key data categories extracted from the selected studies.

**Table 1.** *The key data categories of the selected studies.*

Data item	Description
Authors & Year	Citation details of the publication
Study type	Empirical (survey, experiment, interview) or theoretical analysis
Cultural context	Region of focus (e.g., China, Japan, Southeast Asia, Europe)
Lacquerware category	Type of lacquerware examined (tableware, decorative objects, ritual items)
Visual elements	Colors, motifs, textures, materials, finishing techniques
Perceived value type	Aesthetic, emotional, symbolic, cultural, or functional value
Consumer pathways	Aesthetic response, cultural identity, symbolic interpretation
Methodology details	Sample size, tools used, analytical techniques
Key findings	Summary of the conclusions or impact pathways discussed

### **Technical roadmap of the systematic review**

In order to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness in the data extraction process, this study developed a technical roadmap, as shown in *Figure 1*. The primary data items extracted from each eligible study included: publication details, research methods, country or cultural context, type and description of lacquerware, visual elements discussed, dimensions of consumer perceived value (e.g., aesthetic, emotional, cultural), and consumer acceptance indicators (e.g., purchase intention, behavioral intention, subjective evaluation). To facilitate thematic coding, all included data items were categorized into three major groups: Visual Attributes, Perceived Value Dimensions, and Consumer Acceptance Variables. NVivo 12 software was used to code these items and to identify co-occurrence patterns, allowing for a more systematic mapping of how specific visual elements (such as color, motif, texture, and gloss) correlate with perceived value constructs (e.g., beauty, uniqueness, cultural symbolism) and behavioral responses.

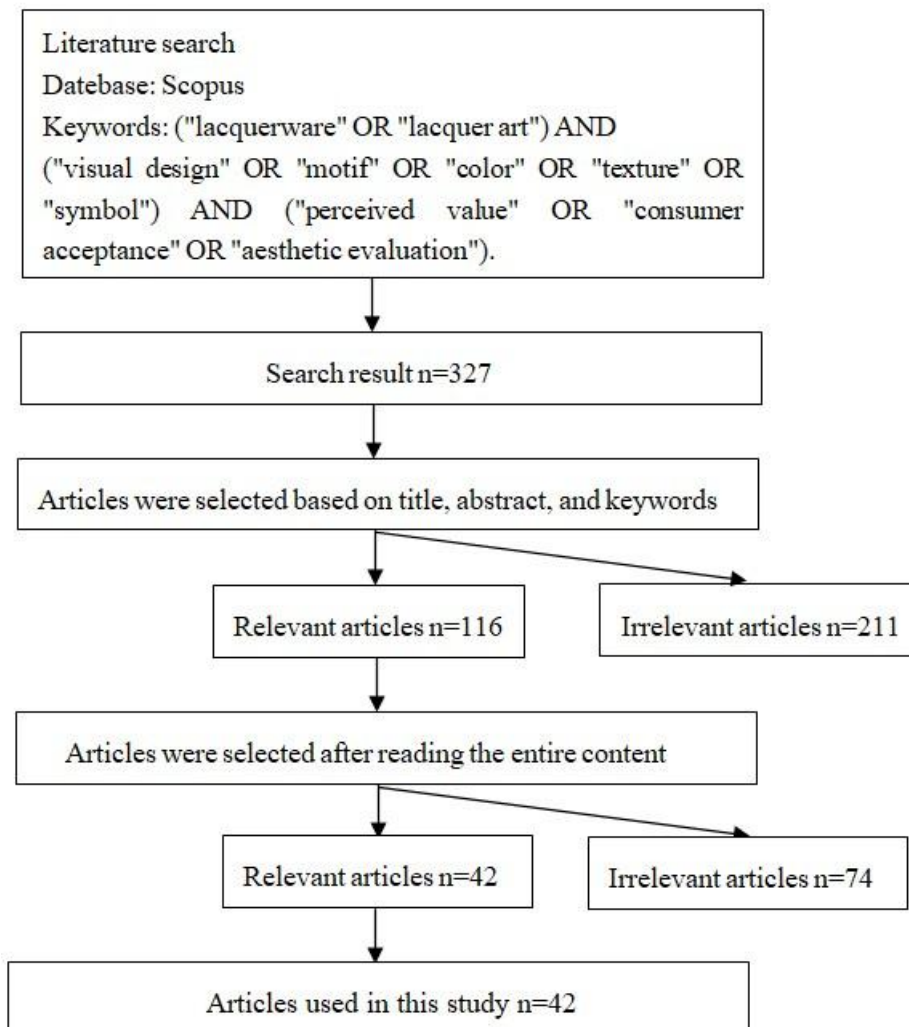


Figure 1. Technical roadmap of the systematic review.

## Results and Discussion

This study presents the core findings from the 42 selected studies, derived through thematic coding and comparative analysis. The results are structured into three main sections: visual Elements in Lacquerware, Perceived value dimensions, and the influence pathways through which visual elements affect consumer acceptance.

### *Visual elements in lacquerware*

This review identified five key categories of visual elements in lacquerware that frequently recur in the literature: color, motif and texture. Color appears in over 85% of the reviewed articles, with red, black, and gold being most prevalent and strongly associated with cultural symbolism and emotional resonance. While East Asian consumers often decode these colors through Confucian and imperial symbolism, Western audiences associate them with exoticism, luxury, and artisanal rarity. Motifs, ranging from phoenixes and dragons to plum blossoms and waves, serve as heritage cues that narrate cultural stories (Parraman, 2016; Wilder Jr et al., 2000). In 28 studies, motif recognition was positively linked to cultural pride and emotional attachment.

Folkloric and nature-inspired patterns increase the perception of craftsmanship authenticity, while abstract motifs in contemporary lacquerware appeal to modernist and minimalist preferences. Motifs often inspired by mythology, flora, fauna, and folklore, play a central role in communicating heritage and aesthetic appeal, reinforcing the product's narrative depth (Xiong, 2024). Texture and material finish, achieved through carving, inlay, and layering, contribute to tactile interest and are often interpreted as indicators of craftsmanship and uniqueness (Zhang and Yang, 2023). Seventeen studies underscore the tactile and reflective qualities of lacquerware surfaces as key indicators of artisanal skill. High-gloss finishes are consistently perceived as premium, ceremonial, and visually rich (Xiao et al., 2024), while matte finishes communicate understated elegance and contemporary functionality. Textural intricacy, achieved through layering, carving, or inlay, enhances perceptions of authenticity and uniqueness.

### ***Perceived value dimensions***

Based on thematic synthesis, the review distilled five dimensions of consumer perceived value in relation to lacquerware's visual presentation: aesthetic, emotional, cultural, symbolic, and functional. Aesthetic value dominates consumer evaluation, as visual harmony, balance, and decoration directly influence perceptions of beauty and quality (Bhandari et al., 2019). Emotional value arises when visual cues evoke affective responses such as nostalgia, serenity, or admiration, especially when motifs and colors resonate with personal memories or cultural familiarity (Chen et al., 2014; Hwang and Hyun, 2013). Cultural value is constructed through consumers' recognition of lacquerware as a traditional art form, with studies emphasizing how historical craftsmanship and local identity are embedded in motifs, materials, and color schemes. Symbolic value involves the role of lacquerware as a representation of taste, status, and identity, particularly in gifting contexts or as collectible items (Rausch, 2006). Though less dominant, functional value is increasingly emphasized in contemporary designs, where consumers assess usability, durability, and practical compatibility alongside visual pleasure (Wang and Hu, 2024). Collectively, these dimensions work in tandem to shape how visual attributes are interpreted and appreciated, transforming surface-level aesthetics into deeper, more layered forms of consumer valuation.

### ***Pathways to consumer acceptance***

Integrating the Visual–Value–Behavior (VVB) Model with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Model, the influence of lacquerware's visual attributes on consumer acceptance can be conceptualized as: visual stimuli → perceived value → behavioral response. The review identifies three interconnected pathways. The aesthetic–emotional pathway arises when harmonious combinations of color, motif, and texture evoke positive emotions—such as admiration, serenity, or nostalgia—thereby enhancing purchase intention. For instance, a high-gloss red-and-gold tray with floral motifs may trigger immediate sensory pleasure and cultural familiarity. The cultural–symbolic pathway functions when motifs and color schemes serve as heritage cues, strengthening identification with tradition, social identity, and symbolic capital. Mythological or nature-inspired patterns (e.g., dragons, phoenixes, plum blossoms) often foster loyalty and cultural endorsement. The pragmatic–functional pathway emerges when visual cues signal craftsmanship quality, material durability, or ergonomic design, appealing to consumers seeking both aesthetic refinement and usability.

These pathways often overlap, producing compounded effects on acceptance. For example, a gold-inlaid red lacquer box may simultaneously deliver aesthetic delight, cultural pride, and symbolic prestige. Cultural context moderates these effects, as interpretations of the same visual elements vary across markets. East Asian consumers often read red-and-gold tones as auspicious and prestigious, while Western audiences may view them as ornate ceremonial designs (Yuan and Kaliyaperumal, 2025). Conversely, minimalist matte-black finishes—linked to Zen aesthetics in Asia—are widely embraced in global markets aligned with minimalist and modernist trends (Watuoto et al., 2024). Overall, these findings confirm that lacquerware’s visual design operates as a stimulus shaping internal perceptions across aesthetic, emotional, cultural, symbolic, and functional dimensions, which in turn drive behavioral acceptance, including purchase, brand advocacy, and cultural endorsement. Surface aesthetics thus serve as an entry point to deeper cultural and emotional engagement, reinforcing lacquerware’s relevance in both heritage markets and contemporary global lifestyles.

### *Synthesis of findings with theory*

The findings of this review provide strong evidence that lacquerware’s key visual attributes—color, motif, and texture/gloss—function as salient stimuli in both the Visual–Value–Behavior (VVB) Model and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) Model. In alignment with Perceived Value Theory, these attributes are not merely decorative; they operate as multidimensional value carriers that shape consumers’ functional, emotional, cultural, and symbolic evaluations. For instance, vibrant red-and-gold palettes and meticulously rendered motifs are perceived as markers of fine craftsmanship and material excellence, reflecting functional value. At the same time, these combinations evoke pleasure and admiration, thereby fulfilling emotional value. From a cultural value perspective, the incorporation of heritage-inspired designs reinforces narratives of tradition and continuity, while symbolic value emerges through associations with prestige, social recognition, and identity signaling (Hao and Hiong, 2024; Xiao et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). The results also align closely with Aesthetic Theory, particularly the principles of harmony, proportion, and sensory richness. Across multiple studies, consumers consistently demonstrated a preference for lacquerware that exhibited balanced composition, coherent color coordination, and high-quality surface finishes. These aesthetic qualities enhance perceived product desirability and strengthen emotional attachment, suggesting that design integrity is a decisive factor in sustaining consumer interest. The presence of gloss, depth, and tactility was frequently cited as heightening sensory engagement, thereby bridging the gap between visual appeal and embodied experience.

Furthermore, the findings reinforce Symbolic Consumption Theory, which posits that consumers often purchase and display goods as extensions of their identity or as representations of group affiliation. Lacquerware motifs rooted in mythological figures, auspicious flora and fauna, or region-specific narratives were shown to function as cultural signifiers and prestige markers. In this sense, lacquerware ownership is not purely an aesthetic choice but a form of symbolic communication—an articulation of cultural pride, refined taste, and social belonging. When mapped onto the VVB framework, these visual elements act as the stimulus stage, generating perceived value across multiple dimensions, which in turn triggers the behavioral stage—manifested in purchase intention, advocacy, and repeat engagement. Likewise, within the S-O-R model, lacquerware’s visual cues serve as environmental stimuli that influence the

organism's internal states, including perceptions of quality, emotional resonance, and symbolic identification, which subsequently determine acceptance behaviors. The convergence of these models strengthens the argument that lacquerware's visual attributes are central mechanisms for shaping consumer behavior, rather than peripheral design choices.

### ***Cross-cultural implications***

The analysis reveals that the meanings attached to lacquerware's visual codes are not universal but deeply embedded in cultural contexts. In East Asian markets, red-and-gold color schemes are widely understood as symbols of prosperity, good fortune, and ceremonial significance, while heritage motifs such as dragons, peonies, or cranes evoke strong emotional and cultural identification. In contrast, Western consumers often interpret these same elements as ornate or exotic, sometimes appreciating their craftsmanship but perceiving them as less suited to everyday use. Interestingly, design variations such as minimalist matte-black lacquerware, which in Asia may be associated with Zen aesthetics and meditative restraint, are often embraced in Western markets for their alignment with modernist and minimalist interior trends. This divergence underscores the necessity for culturally adaptive design strategies that maintain authenticity while tailoring visual presentations to local interpretive frameworks. For example, while maintaining the integrity of traditional craftsmanship, brands targeting Western audiences might emphasize simplified motifs or neutral color palettes to enhance versatility and integration into contemporary lifestyles, whereas in Asian markets, maintaining intricate patterns and auspicious colors could reinforce heritage resonance. This cultural sensitivity ensures that lacquerware appeals to diverse audiences without diluting its historical and artistic identity (Xiaoju, 2023).

### ***Limitations***

Despite its comprehensive scope, this review is constrained by several methodological limitations. First, language bias remains a concern, as the majority of included studies were published in English and Chinese, potentially excluding relevant literature in Japanese, Korean, French, or other languages where lacquerware traditions also hold significance. Second, database selection limitations may have led to the omission of relevant but unindexed sources, particularly grey literature and regional design archives. Third, the reliance on predominantly cross-sectional studies limits the ability to observe how consumer perceptions and acceptance patterns evolve over time, especially in response to globalization and shifting aesthetic trends. These limitations necessitate caution when generalizing the findings across different temporal and cultural contexts.

### ***Future research directions***

The theoretical insights established here form a solid foundation for empirical studies that integrate both qualitative and quantitative methods. Future research could employ quantitative surveys to measure the relative strength of associations between specific visual attributes and distinct perceived value dimensions, while qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews or focus groups could uncover deeper symbolic interpretations and cultural nuances. Comparative cross-cultural studies are particularly promising, as they could track how globalization, cultural hybridization, and lifestyle

changes alter aesthetic codes and acceptance thresholds. Longitudinal research would be valuable for assessing whether sustained exposure to lacquerware in different markets leads to evolving preferences or deeper cultural assimilation. Additionally, experimental designs manipulating single visual variables could help isolate and verify the causal mechanisms proposed within the VVB and S-O-R frameworks. Such research would not only validate theoretical propositions but also guide evidence-based design and marketing strategies.

## **Conclusion**

This systematic review synthesizes evidence from 42 studies to clarify how lacquerware's primary visual elements—color, motif, and texture/gloss—shape consumer perceived value and acceptance. The findings confirm that these elements act as powerful stimuli within both the Visual–Value–Behavior (VVB) and Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) models, influencing functional, aesthetic, emotional, cultural, and symbolic value perceptions. By integrating Perceived Value Theory, Aesthetic Theory, and Symbolic Consumption Theory, the review demonstrates that lacquerware's visual appeal extends beyond immediate attraction, fostering long-term engagement through cultural resonance, identity signaling, and emotional attachment. A key insight from this study is the moderating role of cultural context, with visual codes eliciting divergent interpretations between Eastern and Western markets. Red-and-gold palettes and intricate motifs may be celebrated as culturally rich and auspicious in Asia, yet perceived as ornate or ceremonial in Western settings, whereas minimalist matte-black designs find near-universal appeal due to their alignment with modernist sensibilities. These differences highlight the necessity of culturally adaptive design strategies that respect heritage authenticity while aligning with local aesthetic codes.

While the review is limited by language bias, database restrictions, and a lack of longitudinal data, it provides a robust theoretical platform for future empirical exploration. Such research can deepen our understanding of how lacquerware's visual attributes interact with evolving consumer values, particularly in an era of rapid globalization and cross-cultural exchange. Ultimately, this study affirms that visual aesthetics are not peripheral but central to lacquerware's market relevance. They serve as both entry points for consumer engagement and as conduits for deeper symbolic, cultural, and emotional connections. By leveraging these insights, designers, marketers, and cultural heritage advocates can ensure that lacquerware remains both a celebrated traditional craft and a dynamic, adaptable product in contemporary global markets.

## **Acknowledgement**

This research is self-funded.

## **Conflict of interest**

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest involve with any parties in this research study.

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