**Supplemental materials**

We collect a total of 65 questionnaires from visitors to Suzhou. The first question assesses the respondents’ familiarity with gardens, and this variable serves as a reference for weighting in subsequent data analysis. We divide the familiarity into five levels, ranging from 1(very unfamiliar) to 5(very familiar), with the number of respondents for each level shown in Table A1. Accordingly, we propose the null hypothesis ,

and conduct a chi-square test on the results, yielding the following outcomes:

Since the is significantly greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, indicating that the differences between the observed data and the expected distribution are insignificant. This suggests that the data may follow a normal distribution. To some extent, this validates the questionnaire design’s rationality and the sample’s diversity, further ensuring the reliability of the data analysis.

The experts in garden art have categorized the elements within the garden into six major types: buildings, windows, water and rockery, inscriptions, paving, and plants. Respondents are asked to rank the six types of elements to examine the perceived strength of their association with Suzhou Classical Gardens. The results are presented in Table A2. Their ranking remains unchanged after weighting by familiarity. However, the gap between the first-ranked “buildings” and the second-ranked “windows” narrows. This indicates that among those who are more familiar with Suzhou Classical Gardens, a higher proportion perceive windows as culturally representative.

To explore this further, we focus on which shapes of windows are considered more culturally representative, and the results are shown in Table A3. The scores before and after weighting are highly similar, indicating that regardless of familiarity with Suzhou Classical Gardens, people generally consider windows of the “artifact” type to be more culturally representative, which mainly includes shapes such as fan-shaped and porcelain-shaped windows.

Additionally, we survey the color perception of Suzhou Classical Gardens. As seen in Table A4, green, white, and cyan are identified as the most representative colors of it.

Table A1. The respondents’ familiarity with Suzhou Classical Gardens.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Familiarity** | **1**  **very unfamiliar** | **2**  **unfamiliar** | **3**  **neutral** | **4**  **familiar** | **5**  **very familiar** |
| **Respondents** | 9 | 17 | 23 | 11 | 5 |

Table A2. The cultural representativeness of different garden elements in Suzhou Classical Gardens.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of** **elements** | **Composite score** | **Weighted score** |
| Buildings | 6.02 | 5.530 |
| Windows | 5.43 | 5.473 |
| Water and rockery | 5.14 | 5.136 |
| Inscription | 4.28 | 4.199 |
| Paving | 3.20 | 3.603 |
| Plants | 2.94 | 3.059 |

Table A3. The cultural representativeness of different window shapes.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Shape of windows** | **Composite score** | **Weighted score** |
| Artifacts (fan, porcelain, …) | 4.09 | 4.074 |
| Plants (crabapple, leaves, …) | 3.57 | 3.610 |
| Polygons (octagon, hexagon, …) | 3.40 | 3.447 |
| Sun and Moon (round, crescent, …) | 2.94 | 2.869 |

Table A4. The cultural representativeness of different colors.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Color** | **Composite score** | **Weighted score** |
| Green | 6.03 | 6.608 |
| White | 6.00 | 6.029 |
| Cyan | 5.32 | 5.821 |
| Black | 4.18 | 3.856 |
| Red | 1.97 | 0.972 |
| Blue | 1.34 | 1.865 |
| Yellow | 0.85 | 0.298 |
| Orange | 0.38 | 0.197 |
| Purple | 0.29 | 0.584 |