

Research article

The Inheritance and Innovation Value of Cultural and Creative Products of the Palace Museum in Beijing

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This study examined the added value of traditional cultural and creative products as part of broader research on promoting cultural exchanges between China and the West through cultural and creative products. In the context of global economic integration, cultural and creative industries (CCIs) have attracted much attention since their emergence. The development of CCIs aims to promote the revival of traditional culture. The researchers took the CCI project of the Palace Museum in Beijing as a research object and conducted literature studies and case studies to understand the values of cultural and creative products, with traditional culture as the theme. The findings indicated that traditional cultural creative products played an essential role in inheriting and promoting the innovative and sustainable development of traditional culture. Moreover, these have the added value of making traditional culture serve modern life.

Keywords: cultural and creative industries, cultural and creative products, traditional cultural, Palace Museum in Beijing, value

1. Introduction

The increase of the global economy and culture integration has gradually brought the cultural and creative industries (CCI) to the spotlight by all the countries due to their high value-added and sustainable development characteristics. And it has become a strategic choice for many countries and a new driving force leading global economic and cultural development [1].

The construction of a stable society is inseparable from the preservation and sustainable development of traditional culture. UNESCO [2] once pointed out that “culture is a renewable resource and the source of a country’s identity, innovation and creativity.” Moreover, UNESCO has placed culture in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a critical investment in the world’s future and a prerequisite for developing globalisation

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[3]. According to Hosagrahar [4], vigorously developing culture and fostering creativity will contribute to SDGs. Under these conditions, the promotion of CCI is preferably a shortcut in enhancing cultural diversity, developing inclusive cities, and realising the sustainable development of traditional culture.

The practicality of CCIs is highly valued worldwide. However, it isn't easy to agree on the generally accepted definition of CCIs due to different national backgrounds [5][6]. Therefore, CCI projects in each country could build their distinct characteristics. The CCI project of the Palace Museum in Beijing has been regarded as a successful example of the revival of contemporary Chinese traditional culture. Its marketing model of collaboration between the museum, the brand, and the design concept of the products reflected the comprehensive thinking of developing CCIs according to national conditions and creating new values of cultural and creative products to realise the sustainable development of traditional culture. Taking the CCI projects of the Palace Museum in Beijing as the research object, this paper discussed a few added values of traditional cultural and creative products under the integration of cultural heritage and CCIs.

2. Literature review

2.1. Cultural and creative industries (CCIs)

The CCIs originated at the end of the 20th century. The British government proposed replacing the traditional "cultural industry" with the "creative industry" concept and formulated a cultural creative industry development strategy, which formed the world's first creative industry with cultural connotations [7]. It is based on culture, with artistic creativity and design as the core, carrying the dual attributes of cultural and economic value [8].

Research on CCIs and related products became popular in China around 2013[9]. Since the government introduced several policies in the same period, promoting CCIs as an essential development strategy to enhance the city's competitiveness [10] [11]. As a result, the development of the industries has received a rapid and vigorous boost.

As the museum's cultural and creative projects leader, the Palace Museum in Beijing has achieved phased success through the combination of intellectual property development, branding, and e-commerce.

2.2. Museums and Brands Collaboration

The "2019 Museum Cultural and Creative Products Market Data Report" [12] jointly released by the Institute of Cultural Economy, Tsinghua University and Tmall website stated, "the market of the cultural and creative products of Chinese museums shows a rapid growth trend, the overall scale of 2019 has increased three times compared to 2017". Also, the cumulative number of visits to the museum's flagship store on Taobao and Tmall (websites for online retail) reached 1.6 billion, 1.5 times the number of visits to museums nationwide.

The achievement benefited from the Internet-based cultural and creative business cooperation project provided by the Tmall shopping network. It is a cross-border cooperation between museum and brand. According to the report [12], from design, development, and production to online and offline dual marketing modes, solving the museum supply chain issues and accelerating the commercialisation of cultural and creative intellectual property rights. As a result, Tmall has built a bridge among consumers, museums and brands with cultural and creative projects and promoted an unprecedented outbreak of cultural and creative products. In the meantime, it has created a new route to encourage the creative development of traditional culture and has positively impacted national cultural confidence.

3. Methodology

This paper adopts literature review and case analysis methods to provide a perspective on the added value of integrating traditional culture into the CCIs. We first learned about the strategic goals of global cultural and creative development through the official website of UNESCO. Then, in the literature review, we used Google Scholar, and CNKI to search for keywords such as cultural and creative industries and the Palace Museum and cited the latest relevant literature. In addition, in the case study, we systematically searched the official website of the Palace Museum and the Tmall retail website to understand the marketing model of the CCI of the Palace Museum. Finally, we put forward some high added value that traditional cultural creative products may have through indirect inference and reflections.

4. Findings

4.1. Case Analysis: Cultural and Creative Product Design of the Palace Museum

Built for the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Palace Museum is China's largest museum of ancient culture and art, with a rich collection of cultural relics and cultural resources. Therefore, the Palace Museum Cultural and Creative Sector has developed the largest IPR in China [13] and has created its own brand. The contrast and cute image break the public's stereotypes of the Forbidden City [14], thus narrowing the distance between the Forbidden City and the people. As a result, the Museum's cultural and creative products have gained many young fans and expanded its consumer group. According to the official website of the Palace Museum, the museum's collection totals more than 1.8 million items [15], and its cultural and creative products have exceeded 10,000. At present, its cultural and creative products cover most types of commodities, including daily necessities, palace accessories, clothing, publications, furnishings, beauty makeup, travel goods, animation, and mobile games, etc [16].



Figure 1: Palace Museum cultural and creative project, image source: (The Palace Museum, 2021).

Adhering to the strategic concept of "making traditional culture popular", the Palace Museum develops cultural and creative products with its unique 'Forbidden City Style' by combining traditional culture elements with modern popular culture, daily products, and market demand [17]. Furthermore, "Accounts of the Cultural and Creative Activities of the Palace Museum" [18] explicitly recorded the guidelines of the current director of the Museum for the CCI projects of the Palace Museum in Beijing, which includes principles such as "to meet public demand as the guide", "based on collection research results", "supported by cultural and creative research and development", "guided by scientific and technological means", and "to promote and develop the national culture as the purpose".

Taking "A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains" (Figure 2.) from the Palace Museum's collection as an example, the design of its innovative cultural products systematically sort out, decompose, reconstruct, and redesign the elements of the art collection. In addition, they combine the excellent traditional cultural elements of the collection with modern products to achieve functional reconstruction.



Figure 2: Collection of the Palace Museum, A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains (Partial), image source: (The Palace Museum, 2021)..



Figure 3: 'A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains' cultural and creative series, Silk scarf. Image source: (Tmall.cn, 2021).

According to Li [19], the Palace Museum has also identified three essential factors for designing and developing cultural and creative products: cultural characteristics, storytelling, and inheritance. The design of all its cultural and creative products should highlight the elements of the Forbidden City, and each cultural and creative product needs its historical background to entrust the product to its due historical meaning.

As shown in Figure 3 and Figure ??, designers extract and transform the visual cultural elements of museum collections and combine them with daily goods through design to present the traditional cultural characteristics to consumers in the form of organisms. In this way, cultural and creative developments can achieve the goal of infiltrating traditional culture into people's modern daily lives. Such products are not only everyday items but also "objects of the cultural communicator". Because the cultural and creative product design based on traditional cultural relics plays the role of cultural messenger in the social economy, conveying cultural information to people through symbolic cultural codes and semantic conversion [20].

4.2. Reflexion

The commercialization of traditional culture is at the heart of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative projects. Based on the above cultural and creative cases of The Palace Museum in Beijing, we found that the factors for the success of its CCIs projects mainly include: the commercialization of IPR and brand protection, the formulation of clear guidelines, products with rich visual and cultural elements that meet market demand, and the flexible marketing mode.

Reviewing the cultural and creative projects of the Palace Museum in Beijing, it is easy enough to find products with cultural relics as the theme was designed to spread historical culture. It takes modern daily goods as the medium for people to feel the atmospheric of traditional culture by simply using them. Therefore, such a product is both a daily good and a medium for the personalised interpretation of culture. In addition, from the "Panorama of Rivers and Mountains" cultural and creative series design cases, we understand that each cultural and creative product of the Palace Museum is designed based on the extensive research results of China cultural relics. These products, which draw inspiration from excellent history and literature, can meet the needs of people's daily lives and ensure that consumers realise actual cultural consumption.

The cultural and creative products of the museums gradually replaced tourist souvenirs because of their high added value. It is generally considered to have the dual attributes of enhancing the cultural significance of products and promoting the social economy. Judging from the design guidance of the Palace Museum in Beijing, cultural and creative products with traditional culture as the theme are designed to spread traditional culture, which possesses the attributes of public moral education. Furthermore, when cultural and creative products infiltrate people's lives as daily items, it will

become a creative education model that cultivates the younger generation's national cultural confidence.

5. Conclusions

The cultural and creative products based on traditional culture consist of two mutually essential parts: the innovative design of traditional culture and its medium. Its actual cultural value lies in the cultural connotation conveyed by designed products, which manifests cultural inheritance. Also, the choice of daily items as the carrier allows consumers to access "tangible historical culture" through the act of "using". In this way, cultural and creative products can meet people's material and spiritual needs, allowing traditional culture to serve modern life while achieving sustainable development.

Besides, the development of cultural and creative products is a way to ensure that traditional culture can keep pace with the times and constantly create new value. Therefore, we suggest that when developing cultural and creative products based on the cultural characteristics of their collections (cultural relics), museums should constantly expand concepts and strategies into designing products with more added value to continuously promote the CCIs and the overall level of social culture.

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