The Modern Transformation of Traditional Culture and the Phenomenon of the Popularity of Cultural and Creative Products from the Forbidden City

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Abstract. In the era of globalization and digitalization, the modern transformation of traditional culture has become a key proposition for cultural inheritance and innovation. As a masterpiece of excellent traditional Chinese culture, the Forbidden City has achieved a magnificent transformation from a "cold" historical symbol to an "internet-famous" cultural IP through digital technology empowerment, youthful expression innovation, and breakthroughs in commercial operation. However, traditional culture still faces the dual dilemmas of "inheritance gap" and "lack of innovation". This paper takes the Forbidden City's cultural and creative phenomenon as the research object, and deeply explores the transformation path and success logic behind it. The analysis in this paper concludes that the core of the Forbidden City's cultural and creative success lies in its transformation from serious cultural relics to fashionable IP through "creative empowerment" and "emotional connection". Based on this, this paper proposes the following suggestions: building immersive cultural experiences, breaking down cultural communication barriers, and constructing a cultural consumption ecosystem.

Keywords: Traditional culture, modern transformation, cultural and creative products of the Forbidden City, cultural dissemination, commercial monetization.

1. Introduction

Excellent traditional Chinese culture is the spiritual lifeblood of the Chinese nation, an important source nurturing socialist core values, and a crucial component of socialist culture with Chinese characteristics. With the rapid development of society and economy and the widespread application of digital technology, the younger generation has become the main force in cultural consumption. Their aesthetic preferences, consumption habits, and information acquisition methods have undergone significant changes. Traditional modes of cultural dissemination and inheritance have become difficult to meet the needs of the new era. How to break down the "time and space barriers" between traditional culture and modern society, make traditional culture "come alive" and "become popular", and achieve a leap from "niche inheritance" to "mass recognition" has become an important issue that needs to be urgently addressed in the cultural field.

Against this backdrop, the rise to fame of the Palace Museum and its cultural and creative products provides an extremely valuable research paradigm. The Forbidden City, once a solemn and mysterious symbol of imperial power, maintained a certain psychological and physical distance from the public. However, over the past decade, through a series of transformations and innovations, the Palace Museum has successfully established itself as a phenomenal "super cultural IP" [1].

This article takes the cultural and creative industries of the Forbidden City as a starting point, systematically sorts out the core elements and implementation mechanisms of the modern transformation of traditional culture, and enriches the relevant theoretical system of traditional culture dissemination and cultural industry development.

By analyzing the successful experiences and existing issues of cultural and creative products from the Forbidden City, this article proposes targeted optimization suggestions. These suggestions can serve as practical references for other museums, cultural institutions, and the modern transformation of traditional cultural IPs. They aim to facilitate the high-quality inheritance and development of

excellent traditional Chinese culture in the new era and promote the transformation and upgrading of the cultural industry.

This article primarily employs literature research, case analysis, and comparative research methods. By reviewing relevant literature on the modern transformation of traditional culture and the development of cultural and creative industries both domestically and internationally, it lays the theoretical foundation for the study. Taking the cultural and creative products of the Forbidden City as a core case, it delves into an analysis of its development history, product strategies, communication methods, and commercial monetization models. By comparing the current development status of cultural and creative products in other museums, it summarizes the unique advantages and common issues of the Forbidden City's cultural and creative products, and proposes a general path for the modern transformation of traditional culture.

2. The Core Connotation and Contemporary Requirements of the Modern Transformation of Traditional Culture

2.1. Core Connotation of Modern Transformation of Traditional Culture

The modern transformation of traditional culture refers to the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional cultural resources based on respecting the core connotation and spiritual value of traditional culture, while combining the aesthetic needs, lifestyles, and technological means of modern society. This process transforms traditional cultural resources from

"historical heritage" into "modern cultural products," achieving the unity of cultural value, social value, and commercial value. Its core connotation includes two levels: first, "creative transformation," which involves refining, reconstructing, and interpreting elements of traditional culture that have contemporary value, making them adapt to the aesthetics and needs of modern society. Second, "innovative development", which involves utilizing modern technology and business models to endow traditional culture with new dissemination carriers and development paths, expanding its influence and vitality [2].

2.2. The Era's Demands for the Modern Transformation of Traditional Culture

The younger generation is the future of cultural inheritance and the main force of cultural consumption. They pursue personalized and diversified cultural experiences, and their acceptance of traditional culture tends to be more "light-hearted" and "fun-oriented". Therefore, the modern transformation of traditional culture needs to be close to the aesthetic preferences and consumption habits of young people, interpreting traditional culture in ways that young people enjoy, and enhancing the attractiveness and recognition of traditional culture.

The rapid advancement of digital technology presents new opportunities for the modern transformation of traditional culture. Through technologies such as virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), big data, and artificial intelligence, digital preservation, immersive display, and personalized dissemination of traditional cultural resources can be achieved. This breaks the spatial and temporal constraints of traditional cultural dissemination, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of cultural communication.

The modern transformation of traditional culture requires adhering to the original intention of culture, inheriting and promoting the core values of traditional culture, and avoiding the loss of cultural connotation due to "over-commercialization"; it also necessitates providing financial support for the inheritance and development of traditional culture through reasonable commercial monetization, forming a virtuous cycle of "cultural inheritance-commercial monetization -re-innovation".

The modern transformation of traditional culture requires breaking down industry barriers and achieving cross-sector integration with fields such as tourism, education, technology, and fashion, thereby expanding the application scenarios and development space of traditional culture. At the same

time, it is necessary to leverage new media platforms, innovate cultural communication methods, and promote traditional culture to the public and the world.

3. Development History and Logic Analysis of the Popularity of Cultural and Creative Products from the Forbidden City

3.1. Development History of Cultural and Creative Products of the Forbidden City

The development journey of cultural and creative products from the Forbidden City can be divided into three stages, each exhibiting distinct developmental characteristics and core strategies.

In the initial stage (2013-2015), the Palace Museum broke stereotypes and made its first breakthrough "out of the circle". In 2013, the Palace Museum established the Cultural and Creative Industry Department, officially launching its cultural and creative industry layout. During this stage, the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products took "cute contrast to their original image" as a breakthrough, launching a series of products that combine traditional cultural elements with modern practical functions, such as "I Know" tape and "court beads headphones", breaking the stereotype of the Palace Museum as "aloof" and "serious", and attracting widespread attention from all sectors of society. At the same time, the Palace Museum began to experiment with the use of new media platforms for dissemination, releasing interesting historical knowledge and cultural and creative product information about the Palace Museum through Weibo and WeChat official accounts, accumulating a preliminary fan base.

During the rapid development stage (2016-2018), the product matrix was enriched, and brand recognition was strengthened. In 2016, Palace Museum Cultural Creative launched the "Palace Museum Taobao" series of products, with a core focus on the "cute" style. It combined elements such as characters and patterns from Palace Museum artifacts with modern daily necessities, developing a diverse range of products, including phone cases, notebooks, lipsticks, and more, forming a diversified product matrix. During this stage, Palace Museum Cultural Creative further intensified its new media dissemination efforts, attracting a large number of young fans through the release of funny short videos and the holding of online interactive activities. The number of Weibo followers of "Palace Museum Taobao" exceeded 10 million. In 2017, Palace Museum Cultural Creative's annual sales reached 1.5 billion yuan, becoming a phenomenal cultural IP.

Maturity stage (2019 to present): Deepening cross-industry integration and exploring sustainable development. In recent years, Palace Museum Cultural and Creative Industries (PMCCI) has begun to transition from "product development" to "IP operation", deepening cross-industry integration with tourism, education, technology, fashion, and other fields. For example, it has collaborated with film and television companies to launch documentaries such as "I Repair Cultural Relics in the Forbidden City" and "New Arrivals: The Forbidden City", developed traditional culture courses in cooperation with educational institutions, and launched AR Forbidden City cultural and creative products in collaboration with technology companies. At the same time, PMCCI focuses on the exploration and inheritance of cultural connotations, launching a series of high-end cultural and creative products to enhance the brand's cultural value and premium pricing ability. In addition, the Forbidden City has provided immersive cultural experiences for consumers by establishing offline experience stores and holding cultural and creative exhibitions, further strengthening brand recognition.

3.2. Analysis of the Logic Behind the Popularity of Palace Museum's Cultural and Creative Products

Stay close to the younger generation while balancing practicality and fun. The Palace Museum Cultural and Creative Products accurately grasp the consumption needs and aesthetic preferences of the younger generation, combining traditional cultural elements with modern daily necessities to launch a series of products that are "high in appearance, practical, and fun" [3]. For example, the "I Know" tape combines the emperor's red seal with modern office and life scenarios, which not only

has cultural connotation but also practical function; "Palace Museum Lipstick" integrates the colors and patterns from Palace Museum artifacts into lipstick design, meeting the needs of young women for personalized and high-appearance beauty products. This product positioning of "practicality + fun" makes traditional culture no longer a "cultural relic shelved on a high shelf", but rather a "cultural consumer product" that can be integrated into daily life, greatly enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the products.

Explore the value of cultural relics and endow products with a soul. The Forbidden City boasts over 1.86 million precious cultural relics, serving as significant carriers of traditional culture and embodying rich historical and cultural values. The Forbidden City Cultural Creative deeply explores the historical stories, cultural connotations, and artistic values embedded in these relics, integrating them into product design and dissemination processes, thereby endowing the products with a unique "cultural soul". For instance, the "Shangxin·Forbidden City" program invites celebrities to delve into the Forbidden City, uncovering the historical stories behind the cultural relics. By merging these relic elements with modern design, the program introduces a series of culturally rich, creative products, allowing consumers to experience the charm of traditional culture while purchasing these products. This "culture + product" model not only elevates the cultural value and premium potential of the products but also strengthens consumers' identification and belonging to traditional culture [4].

Expanding profit channels and achieving sustainable development. The Palace Museum Cultural Creative has established a diversified business monetization model, realizing profits through various channels such as product sales, cross-industry collaborations, offline experiences, and IP licensing. For instance, cultural creative products are sold through online platforms like "Forbidden City Taobao" and "Forbidden City Cultural Creative Flagship Store" as well as offline experience stores. Collaborations with enterprises in the tourism, education, and technology sectors are forged to develop co-branded products and organize events, thereby expanding profit opportunities. Through IP licensing, cultural elements of the Forbidden City are authorized for use by other enterprises, generating licensing fees. This diversified business monetization model provides financial support for the sustainable development of Palace Museum Cultural Creative and also promotes the widespread dissemination of traditional culture [5].

4. Issues in the Modern Transformation of Traditional Culture: Taking the Cultural and Creative Products of the Forbidden City as an Example

4.1. Problems in the Transformation of Traditional Culture

With the popularity of cultural and creative products from the Forbidden City, many domestic museums have followed suit and launched their own cultural and creative products. However, most of these products lack innovation, and there is a serious phenomenon of product homogeneity. The cultural and creative products of the Forbidden City also face certain innovation bottlenecks. Some products simply combine traditional cultural elements with modern daily necessities, lacking in-depth exploration and creative interpretation of cultural connotations. This results in products with low added value, making it difficult to meet the increasingly diverse needs of consumers [6].

In addition, some products excessively emphasize "fun" and "practicality" in pursuit of sales, ignoring the core connotation and spiritual value of traditional culture, resulting in insufficient cultural heritage in the products.

The modern transformation of traditional culture requires a team of versatile talents who possess cultural literacy, creative abilities, and business acumen. However, the talent development in the Palace Museum's cultural and creative sector, as well as other domestic cultural and creative institutions, is relatively lagging. There is a shortage of talents who understand both traditional culture and modern design, marketing, and digital technology [7]. This has led to difficulties in effectively enhancing the design quality, dissemination effectiveness, and commercial monetization capabilities of cultural and creative products, thereby restricting the progress of the modern transformation of traditional culture.

4.2. Optimization Path for the Modern Transformation of Traditional Culture

4.2.1. Strengthen innovation drive and enhance product competitiveness

To avoid assimilating competition and build distinctive brands, cultural institutions should leverage their own cultural resource advantages to create unique cultural and creative brands, steering clear of blindly following trends and engaging in homogenization competition. For instance, the Shaanxi History Museum can leverage its unique cultural relics, such as the Terra Cotta Warriors and Tang Dynasty glazed pottery, to develop cultural and creative products with the characteristics of "Qin style and Tang charm". The Suzhou Museum can combine the cultural characteristics of the Jiangnan water towns to launch cultural and creative products with the "Suzhou-style aesthetics" style [8].

4.2.2. Stick to the cultural original intention and balance cultural value and commercial value

The modern transformation of traditional culture requires adhering to the original intention of culture, respecting the core connotation and spiritual value of traditional culture, and avoiding the loss of cultural connotation due to excessive commercialization. In the process of product design and dissemination, emphasis should be placed on the interpretation and inheritance of traditional culture, so that consumers can understand the historical background and cultural significance of traditional culture while purchasing products, achieving the purpose of cultural dissemination [9].

Cultural institutions should reasonably control the commercial scale of cultural and creative products, avoiding blindly pursuing sales volume and ignoring product quality and cultural connotation. By enhancing product quality and optimizing service experience, they can create high-end cultural and creative brands, enhancing the cultural value and premium pricing ability of the brands. For example, the Palace Museum can further increase its research and development efforts for high-end cultural and creative products, launching products with collectible and artistic value to meet the needs of high-end consumers.

4.2.3. Strengthen intellectual property protection and safeguard brand rights and interests

Cultural institutions should strengthen the application and protection of intellectual property rights for cultural and creative products and establish a comprehensive intellectual property protection system. They should fully apply for intellectual property rights such as patents, trademarks, and copyrights for cultural and creative products, promptly detect and combat intellectual property infringements, and safeguard their legitimate rights and interests.

Enterprises related to the cultural and creative industry should strengthen industry self-discipline, abide by intellectual property laws and regulations, and avoid infringing on others' intellectual property rights. At the same time, they should enhance communication and cooperation within the industry to jointly promote the healthy development of the cultural and creative industry. For example, they can establish a cultural and creative industry association, formulate industry norms and standards, and strengthen the protection and management of intellectual property rights of cultural and creative products [10].

Through publicity and education, public welfare activities, and other means, it aims to enhance consumers' awareness of intellectual property protection, guide consumers to purchase genuine cultural and creative products, and discourage them from buying counterfeit products. For example, the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products can disseminate relevant knowledge about intellectual property protection through new media platforms, calling on consumers to support genuine products and jointly maintain the healthy development of the cultural and creative industry.

4.2.4. Strengthen the construction of the talent team and provide intellectual support

Cultural institutions should intensify their efforts to introduce composite talents, attracting individuals who possess knowledge of both traditional culture and modern design, marketing, and digital technology to join their cultural and creative teams. By offering attractive remuneration packages and a favorable development platform, they can attract and retain talent.

Collaborate with universities and research institutions to establish cultural and creative talent training bases, offer relevant professional courses on the modern transformation of traditional culture, and cultivate professional cultural and creative talents. At the same time, regularly organize training for cultural and creative teams to enhance the cultural literacy, creative ability, and business thinking of team members.

Establish and improve a talent incentive mechanism to encourage members of cultural and creative teams to innovate and start businesses. Provide financial and policy support to talents with innovative spirit and entrepreneurial abilities, stimulating their innovative vitality and entrepreneurial enthusiasm.

5. Conclusion

This article takes the cultural and creative products of the Forbidden City as a core case study, exploring the path of modern transformation of traditional culture. The rise to fame of Forbidden City culture is essentially the "rebirth" of traditional culture in the context of modern society. It proves that when 600 years of historical accumulation meet contemporary innovative forces, traditional culture can not only "survive", but also "flourish". This transformation not only provides a new path for cultural inheritance, but also contributes Chinese wisdom to building a community with a shared future for mankind. In the wave of digital civilization, the story of the Forbidden City is still being written, and the current transformation of traditional culture is ushering in a new era full of possibilities.

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