

# Exploring the Combination of Creative Design in Higher Education and Local Culture

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**Abstract:** In the current trend of continuous economic development, the cultural industry holds an indispensable position in the development of the times. Creative culture in universities has gradually become a new "focus" for young people in recent years, and every new school year or graduation season sees many university cultural and creative products "becoming popular." An outstanding university cultural and creative product that can successfully "become popular" often has a close relationship with its unique and fresh design and its own cultural attributes, as evidenced by many excellent university cultural and creative products. Right now, consumers no longer have a single requirement for the intrinsic function or external packaging of cultural and creative products, and they emphasize additional functions such as emotional value, spiritual comfort, and so on. With the rapid development and widespread social attention of the cultural and creative industry at present, how university cultural and creative products stand out is one of the critical issues of today.

**Keywords:** Universities; Cultural and Creative Design; Local Culture; Exploration

## 1. Problems with the Current State of University Cultural and Creative Design

### 1.1 The problem of Product Homogenization is Widespread, Leading to Aesthetic Fatigue

Looking at the design of the admission notices and cultural and creative products for the new undergraduate students of the 2022 and 2023 levels, most universities still mainly use design techniques with only cultural elements such as the school badge and motto. In the case of admission notices, the design techniques are mainly reflected in the layout, font, and color. Compared to the admission notices and cultural and creative product designs of the 2022 level

and earlier, there has been some development and innovation, but the homogenization problem reflected in most university cultural and creative products still exists.

### 1.2 The Short Memory Cycle and Thin Cultural Atmosphere of the Product

In recent years, many creative products or brands from universities have continued to gain popularity. The reason for this phenomenon lies in their unique design and cultural connotation, and these popular creative products not only provide a unique appearance, but also keep up with the functions and emotional value, thus maintaining enduring vitality in consumer memory cycles. However, some current university creative products or brands lack a memorable point in the eyes of the public, and are immature in the use of cultural elements and the expression of cultural values, resulting in inefficient or even ineffective cultural output behaviors.

### 1.3 Immature Cultural Output and Lack of Design Direction

Some university creative products lack understanding of local or campus culture during the design process, resulting in immature handling of cultural elements and subpar design. This leads to the wastage of many valuable cultural elements with educational significance. University creative products serve important roles in moral norms, emotional identity, and value transmission. Hence, the information that university creative products should convey is the development history and human culture of the institution, rather than direct creation of university culture or superficial design of campus human landscapes. How to maximize the use of university culture is the key issue.

## 2. Feasibility and Necessity of the Organic Integration of University Cultural Creativity with Local Culture

The organic integration of university cultural

creativity with local culture can strengthen the core recognition symbols of university culture. University culture can enhance the audience's basic impression of the university and the local area by leveraging local and regional cultures, while also extending its own unique cultural characteristics, forming distinct cultural symbols, generating emotional value, and eliciting emotional resonance among the audience towards university culture and local culture.

"Wuhan University's 'Lugong Impression' cultural and creative brand, established by Wuhan University, is a successful case of integrating local culture. Among the 130th-anniversary cultural and creative series products launched by 'Lugong Impression', Lugong Mountain and the humanities and architecture of the university are combined, vivid cherry blossom elements are matched. This series of cultural and creative products have clever designs, which not only bring a strong sense of belonging and identity to the teachers and students of the university but also attract consumers, making many consumers like it, and yearn for Wuhan University. The 'Lugong Impression' cultural and creative brand established by Wuhan University is undoubtedly a business card for the university to enter the broad cultural market, and it is also one of the media that integrates the university culture with local culture. For most people, the first impression of Wuhan University is its cherry blossoms. During the cherry blossom season, Wuhan University has become a popular 'check-in' spot, and cherry blossoms and many humanities and scenic elements such as Lugong Mountain have gradually become one of its representative calling cards. Overall, the combination of university culture and local culture is one of the breakthrough and innovative directions for university cultural and creative products to generate emotional value and trigger reflective behavior."

The integration and mutual benefit development of university culture and local culture is one of the effective ways to promote the economic and cultural development of the region. When the university culture and local culture are organically integrated, it may bring not only the successful output of cultural values, but also potential benefits in various aspects such as expanding the objective tourism market. The huge benefits generated in the economic and cultural aspects will promote the innovative

development and creative transformation of university cultural industry and local cultural industry. The sense of identity and belonging of the local people and the university faculty and students to the university and the local area will be strengthened, and it can also enhance the cultural confidence of the people in the university and the local area.

To sum up, the integration of university cultural and creative design with local culture is not only a breakthrough and innovation, but also an opportunity in the current era of development trends.

### 3. Design

#### 3.1 Preparation for Design

##### 3.1.1 Cultural and Market Investigation

The authenticity and accuracy of culture are related to whether cultural and creative products can provide correct values, educational significance, emotional value, etc. Authentic and accurate cultural investigation covers not only the current social situation, but also many aspects of the history, humanities, economy, politics, etc., of the university and the local area. The overall investigation needs to be carried out using a method that divides it into periods. Conducting the investigation in periods can maintain the continuity and systematic nature of various aspects of the university and the local area, without leading to disconnection or fragmentation during the investigation process. This is conducive to the refined extraction of cultural data, the maintenance of the systematic nature of cultural and creative elements, and the emotional progression and resonance of the cultural and creative products produced [1]. In particular, the establishment, mid-term, and present time of a university are the three important key nodes. Observing the university from its establishment to the present three stages can intuitively feel the cultural heritage of the school and make corresponding style matches for the cultural and creative products of the university.

The cultural survey not only requires a macro-level sorting and generalization, but also indispensable cultural market research. Cultural market research can provide clear design direction for later design work, greatly increase fault tolerance, and effectively extract the core cultural symbols of high-level or local cultures from existing cultural data. The focus of cultural

market research should combine the actual local conditions and the overall trend of the cultural market, analyze its own shortcomings, and focus on researching and analyzing successful cases, while taking into account the differences and similarities between local consumer groups and large market consumer groups, and ultimately adjusting the positioning of cultural and creative products and the targeted consumer groups.

### 3.1.2 Refining and Extracting Cultural Symbols

The core cultural symbols of a product are related to whether the product has cultural connotations and values, and whether it can have a certain impact on the consumer group, the market, and the society. Therefore, the core cultural symbols of the product need to be clear, defined, and primary. According to Donald Norman's theory of emotional design, emotional design combines culture and emotion, bringing not only the value of emotions, but also can evoke emotional resonance and reflective behavior after use. The instinctive, behavioral, and reflective aspects of emotional design are one of the basic requirements for a product to achieve, and the role of cultural symbols in it is crucial. For example, there is a deep connection between Anshan City and Liaoning University of Science and Technology. Liaoning University of Science and Technology was known as Anshan Iron and Steel Institute in 1958, and it gradually became closely related to the Anshan Iron and Steel Plant at that time. Therefore, the core culture of Liaoning University of Science and Technology and its local culture can easily be extracted as "steel culture". Similarly, Lanzhou University is located close to the Mogao Grottoes, a Chinese treasure in Dunhuang, Gansu, and the region has a strong cultural atmosphere in terms of humanities and historical culture. This can be clearly seen in cultural and creative products as the "desert culture" and the "Dunhuang culture".

## 3.2 Design Practice

### 3.2.1 Organic Integration of University Culture and Local Culture

The extracted symbols of university and local culture are not directly copied to the products, but need to undergo secondary processing of cultural symbols. The additional value generated by cultural and creative products is often not due to the simple transfer of cultural symbol elements, but requires thoughtful emotional endowment by the designer. In this way, the

value of cultural and creative products is not just a "cultural container", but also an "artwork". Here, artwork does not refer to its original meaning, but rather indicates that the appearance and form of the cultural and creative products express "culture" endowed with emotions. The reprocessing of cultural symbol elements can be combined with different design techniques, such as splitting, merging, deforming, and restoring... This will also make the presentation of cultural elements more aesthetically pleasing, thus bringing them closer to users and consumers in appearance, achieving the intended effect. Based on this, both can be organically combined. This not only encourages users and consumers to think actively, but also presents university culture and local culture to the market in a unique way. Finally, adjustments to the design are made to ensure that the shape, color, and design scheme are not conflicting or contradictory, and adjustments are made in a timely manner based on the investigation of design proposals and feedback.

### 3.2.2 The organic combination of product cultural connotation and function.

While integrating cultural symbols, it is necessary to take into account the functional aspect of the product. The further enhancement of cultural and creative products lies in whether their own cultural connotations match and blend with their functions. Most of the cultural and creative products on the market today can basically meet the independent basic requirements of appearance and function, and only a few products can bring about unique innovations and changes in the relationship between appearance and function. This is also an important factor for cultural and creative products to stand out in the market. The famous Japanese product designer Naoto Fukasawa, in the "Re-design of Everyday Products" design exhibition planned by Kenya Hara, produced a very representative design - a round tea bag that can inform the user of the best time to drink tea for the best taste, and a puppet tea bag with a drawstring. The appearance of these two tea bags is extremely simple, without overly complicated designs, but the appearance of the tea bag can interact with the user during use, bringing a good experience to the user. This clever design is still one of the classic representative works in the design field. Taking this as an example, the organic combination of the cultural connotation and function of cultural

and creative products is also one of the ways to stand out in the market.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In the present day, creative products from higher education institutions constitute an important medium for cultural output. They play a significant role, as the organic integration of these products with local culture can not only promote a sense of belonging and identity among the faculty and students of the respective institutions, but also enhance the cultural confidence of the public. Furthermore, this integration can lead to positive economic and cultural development in a region, fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between higher education institutions and local communities. The innovative integration of higher education

and local cultures is currently a path and solution for the innovative development and creative transformation of creative products in higher education institutions, and it represents a breakthrough in breaking the inherent modes of thinking in creative product design.

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