

Analysis of Cultural and Creative Products in the Palace Museum

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, cultural and creative products from the Palace Museum, located in Beijing, China, have attracted people's attention. More than 120 million Taobao users follow its shops, and many products, such as stationaries, ornaments, mystery boxes, and cosmetics, are sold out. The elements of the products are taken from the Palace Museum in order to publicize Chinese traditional culture. It is beneficial for other museums to learn about the Palace Museum's cultural promotion methods so that they can use similar methods to propaganda their unique artifacts and historical facts as well. Considering that many scholars have already done their researches and shared their conclusions, this paper aims to summarize the existing ideas about the reasons behind the business and cultural success of the Palace Museum, and make an analysis of the internet visualization and questionnaire results. The success of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products comes from two parts--innate part and strategic part. For one, the Palace Museum benefits from its rich cultural background with many unique elements and enjoys a good reputation for its extraordinary architecture and delicate artifacts; for another thing, the Palace Museum publicizes through TV productions, social media and produces all kinds of cultural and creative products that are of relatively low prices and is suitable for all ages.

Keywords: the Palace Museum, cultural and creative products, business, online shopping.

1. INTRODUCTION

Six hundred years ago, an abdication, special name for announcement by Chinese emperors, issued the completion of the palace museum. In the next 504 years, the Forbidden City was home to 24 emperors and their family in Ming and Qing Dynasty. It was renamed as the Palace Museum soon after the last emperor was banished from the Forbidden City [1]. Being the most important museum in China and the largest palace in the world, the Palace Museum is now a symbol of China for its dedicate designs, and the infinite variety of antiques---including books, pottery, jewelries and so on--- are on display. It is also famous for its creative and cultural products in recent years. These products designed, produced and sold by the Palace Museum have always been discussed as it is so successful in combining the past and the present using daily necessities. The history of the cultural and creative products can be traced back to 2014. The public's impression of Emperor Yongzheng of Qing Dynasty as an extremely diligent ruler changed completely after his emoji and cute stories came out in an article from Palace Museum's WeChat public account [2]. Physical peripheral products appeared later. They

were called souvenirs in the past and sold in physical gift shops. Now, as the arrival of the Internet Age, customers can purchase them online. Nearly everything in the Palace Museum can be made as cultural products--ranging from a small pattern on the roof to the whole palace itself. In addition, it produces television programs with celebrities to investigate areas, including undisclosed ones, to present detailed stories and find more elements for creative products. The success of Palace Museum's cultural and creative products has been studied for a long time. Palace Museum uses several strategies to attract more customers. Based on the opinions of existing papers, this article aims to analyze the success of Palace Museum's promotion strategy through internet visualization and questionnaires.

2. CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The primary advantage of the Palace Museum is its IP--intellectual properties [3]. Unlike other museum that only displays artifacts, the Palace Museum itself is a grand artifact. Thousands of people have lived there before in the past 600 years, and every corner of the museum is carefully designed. With a history of 600 years, the Palace Museum can extract elements from

people or stories related to the Forbidden City. For instance, earrings are made in the shape of palace lanterns, and phone supporters are made in the shape of royal guards. These items are often designed according certain element in the Palace Museum. It can be as small as a little pattern on the wall or as large as the palace itself. It is commonly known that a museum like the Palace Museum has millions of stories and the infinite variety of elements that can be easily incorporated into cultural and creative products. This is an innate advantage of the Palace Museum.

3. POSITION

The Palace Museum enjoys a fair name as it is a national museum with a great number of well-preserved antiques. This is one of the reasons why it has the largest cultural and creative product sales. With good reputation, the museum can find excellent artists and work with better producers, which makes the shop trustworthy and customers are willing to buy its products. The increasing number of antiques on display and the appearance of modern designers with unique and eye-catching

designing styles also brings products with more varieties and different designs.

4. VARIETY OF PRODUCTS

With the help of the original advantages like rich cultural background and automatically good reputation, the Palace Museum produces a lot of products such as lipsticks, tapes, notebooks, decorations, and so on. It also produces special products for holidays. The sales are limited which attracts the customers to pay at a high price [4]. For example, the Palace Museum sells calendars that introduces one antique per day at the end of a year. It sells red pockets and red socks around the Spring Festival. It also sells mooncakes during the Mid-autumn festival. These products can not only be used to increase income for the museum to improve itself, but also promotes people to pay more attention to traditional Chinese cultures. What's more, the prices of the products are set according to target population with different income levels. As mentioned before, the Palace Museum sells daily necessities, stationaries, food, make-ups, and so on.

Product Type	Product Characteristic	Target Population	Product List
Creative Life	the Palace Museum life allusions	consumers at all levels	notebook, U-pillow, carved paper lamp, audio,
Palace Museum Doll	the germination of the mascot of the Palace Museum	consumers at all levels	glasses cloth royal cat series, imperial concubines series
Clothing Bag	the Palace Museum colors and patterns	female consumers at all levels	silk scarves, headscarves, handbag
Ornament and Colorful Makeup	the Palace Museum's characteristic craft	female consumers with middle and high Income	key chain, earrings, bracelet, hand rope, lipstick, eye shadow, blush.
Furnishing	high imitation of paintings in the Palace Museum as a creative point	consumers with middle and high Income	ceramic cup, small vertical shaft, decorative painting, tea set, ornament
National Ceremony	Chinese characteristics	high-income people, consumers with the need to donate to others	jade pendant, white porcelain

Figure 1 Application of New Media in the Marketing and Promotion of Cultural and Creative Products in Museums [5]

Classification	Price Interval	Product List
Low-end products	0.8-579yuan	greeting card, bookmark, heat insulation pad, paper tape, gift bag, hanging
Mid-end products	580-2879yuan	brooches, teapot, cup, tray, gift box, decorative painting, art towel
High-end products	2880-16800yuan	dehua white porcelain, lady's handbag, white jade Ruyi, advanced teaware set

Figure 2 Application of New Media in the Marketing and Promotion of Cultural and Creative Products in Museums [5]

Concluded from Figure 1 and Figure 2 listed below, consumers of the products produced by the Palace Museum are across all genders, ages, and income levels. Some products are affordable for consumers at all levels, while others are only bought by people with high income as presents.

5. PROMOTION

5.1. Social Media

The Palace Museum has over 10 million followers on Weibo. Its official account posts two blogs each day—one is a daily topic on weather called “Let’s read the calendar together”, and the other is usually about an artifact or a story illustrated with words and videos or pictures. On big festivals such as the 600th birthday, the 24 solar terms (a supplementary calendar used to guide agriculture in ancient China) the official account will post pictures of the palace and release messages about selling commemorative coins. It also shows people the delicate designs of the palace—the sun will light up the plaque in Qianqing Palace and the surrounding dragons on the Winter Solstice, the 22nd solar term, and the water will flow out of stone dragons’ mouths beside the bridges on rainy days. There is a famous quote from the bloggers on Weibo “Every time it snows, the Palace Museum turns back to the Forbidden City.” That is, the pictures posted about museum in the snow triggers people to learn more about the past. People feel connected to the Palace Museum when they read these posts every day. It can attract more attention and help increase the number of visitors.

The Palace Museum has found its position in the Internet Age [6]. Unlike other traditional museums, the Palace Museum is one of the first museums that launches documentaries and TV programs [7]. These visual productions indicates that the Palace Museum is not just a normal museum that only displays antiques. Instead, the Palace Museum itself is an antique that is well worth learning more about. In 1987, the Oscar film *The Last Emperor* was filmed in the Palace Museum. It is the only movie that has been filmed inside the Palace Museum in history, which makes it valuable and classic. In 2016, the documentary *I’m Repairing Antiques in the Palace Museum* made a stir. It shows people the repairing processes behind the exhibitions, teaches people some basic skills of antique-repairing, and probably improves the situation that few students want to be repairers in that they express their concerns of lack of apprentices of certain repairing skills. In 2018, the TV program *What’s New On The Palace Museum* successfully showed the audience another side of the Palace Museum and attracted people’s attention by inviting different celebrities to explore the Palace Museum, including unopened areas. These celebrities are asked to finish some tasks and find certain antiques or stories in each episode. Then they will walk around in the palace and

talk to many scholars and professors there. At last, they will use the elements they find and design cultural and creative products with artists. The products will be sold on Taobao.

5.2. Cooperation with brands

As more and more are attracted by different brands, the Palace Museum works with different brands and famous designers to increase product varieties and sales. Together with Miniso, the Palace Museum produces 159 cultural and creative products ranging from 10 RMB to aromatherapy of 40 RMB. The low price and different kinds of products are suitable for consumers with of different ages, genders, and income levels. Having several Philips lamps preserved from the late Qing Dynasty, the Palace Museum decides to work with Philips to produce shavers for men to use. There are shavers with different colors and patterns for people to choose. The Palace Museum also produces cases for Kindle because Kindle is taking the lead of the e-book market. The cases have four different patterns from four ancient paintings. Moreover, it incorporates ancient love stories between animals, such as cranes and butterflies, into portable chargers both for sell and for sharing. Apart from daily necessities, the Palace Museum also produces edible goods. For instance, it sells NongFu Spring with limited editions of bottles painted with emperors and their concubines. It sells Orio, McDonald’s, Daoxiang Village, and Maotai. Similar collaboration also applies to credit cards and Anta.

5.3. Redesigning of characters

Nowadays, the funny redesigned pictures of ancient emperors and their concubines are quite popular. There is a picture of Emperor Yongzheng with a gesture saying yes. A picture of Emperor Qianlong wearing sunglasses is also popular. In Taobao shops and posts from WeChat official account and Weibo official account, the Palace Museum uses these funny pictures frequently to ask consumers to purchase the goods. There are some words like “If you buy the product, we will be friends”, “OMG. I will cut off my hands if I shop online again” on some pictures. These pictures successfully combine popular internet language and the serious figures in the past. They make consumers feel that the museum is younger and closer to them. These funny words also amuse the consumers and attract them to purchase. In addition, the Palace Museum raises many cat. Some are offspring of the royal cats in the palace while others are vagrant cats. Their job is to protect the palace from mice. However, recently, the cats become famous for their cute figures and have a lot of fans. Many tourists come to the Palace Museum to see the cats and mail them food if they are not able to visit by themselves. Many visitors come to the Palace Museum specially to see the cats. Having a lot of fans for the cats, the Palace Museum benefits a lot,

because it attracts more visitors and more purchasers of mystery boxes. Some consumers even buy a lot of mystery boxes to get certain cats.

6. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the success of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products comes from the innate part and strategic part. The Palace Museum benefits from its rich cultural background with many unique elements and enjoys a good reputation for its extraordinary architecture and delicate artifacts. Moreover, the Palace Museum produces various kinds of cultural and creative products with relatively low prices, suitable for all ages, and rich in Chinese traditional culture, while publicizing itself and its products through TV productions, social media, not forgetting the fact that it also cooperates with brands in different areas.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Ran Zhao.

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