



Research on the Creative Design of ICH and Brand Co-branding

--The example of Dunhuang ICH

Yi Chen

Guangdong University of Technology, industrial design, College of Art and Design, Guangzhou, 510030

1197241103@qq.com

Abstract. Based on the phenomenon of intangible cultural heritage (hereinafter referred to as "ICH") and brand co-branding, this article analyses the ways and status of ICH culture and brand co-branding, and analyses the ideas of ICH cultural and creative products. The article also analyses the creative design categories, elements and innovative strategies of Dunhuang's cultural heritage and brand co-branding through market research and data search. Through the analysis of the results, the article summarizes the empowerment of intangible cultural heritage culture and brand co branding, and verifies that intangible cultural heritage culture and brand co branding are a successful practice in the history of intangible cultural heritage development.

Keywords: ICH, Dunhuang, cultural creation, brand co-branding design

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

In Chapter I, Article 2 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage issued by UNESCO (United Nations Educationnel, Scientific and Cultural Organization), ICH is defined as "the social practices, representations of ideas, expressions, knowledge, skills and associated instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, consider to be part of their cultural heritage"^[1].

In recent years, intangible culture has been made known to the general public through the strong support of national policies and publicity, which has led to a flurry of "intangible heritage fever". The most talked-about of these is the One of the most discussed phenomena is the co-branding of ICH with brands.

Brand co-branding is a collaboration between two brands. One brand acts as a cultural symbol and provides the style, while the other brand provides the actual product.^[2] In the process of co-branding, the brand is responsible for providing the product, while the heritage culture provides the cultural connotation needed for the prod-

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uct, and the two complement each other, which generates is more than simply pooling their efforts together.

The co-branding of heritage culture and brands has become an emerging business sector. At the same time, the Chinese government has increased support for the protection and inheritance of ICH, encouraging enterprises to promote ICH through brand co branding and other means. This has gradually made the phenomenon of ICH and brand co branding a trend, accelerating the dual track development of the ICH industry and brand cultural image.

1.2 Purpose and problem of the study

The issue of intangible cultural heritage and brand co branding is a two-way problem. For intangible cultural heritage, emphasis should be placed on analyzing how it can be promoted through branding, and further promoting the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. For the brand side, it should focus on analyzing how intangible cultural heritage culture should be combined with brand concepts, in order to increase the cultural connotation and added value of the brand. Intangible cultural heritage culture and brand co branding are new developments in the cultural and creative industry. This article studies the current design status of non heritage cultural and creative products from the perspective of designers, explores the design ideas of non heritage cultural and creative products, and conducts research on co branded products with Dunhuang elements through market product research, data retrieval, and other methods. Taking Dunhuang intangible cultural heritage culture and brand co branding as an example, it explores the empowerment of co branding design for the development of intangible cultural heritage, Further explore innovative strategies for intangible cultural heritage and brand co branding.

2 Analysis of ICH and brand co-branding

2.1 ICH and brand co-branding approaches

Intangible cultural heritage has a wide range of orientations, and its manifestations are relatively diverse. In terms of the design of ICH products, the types of products that can be involved are also quite extensive. As of March 2023, there were 1,557 national-level ICH representative items recognised in China, of which traditional skills and traditional art items accounted for approximately 27%. Currently, the categories of non-heritage cultural and creative products commonly found in the market include stationery, clothing and accessories (see Table 1 below for a detailed category analysis). For the Chinese market, the co-branding of ICH culture with brands is mainly centered on co-branded products, which is reflected in the brand's incorporation of ICH elements into the products, such as the patterns, colours, textures and shapes of the products, and the innovation and processing of these elements, which are then combined with the characteristics of the product categories for export.

Table 1. Heritage culture and brand co-branding category analysis table

Co-branded categories	Related carriers	Related brands
Creative Home	Mugs, lamps, ornaments, wall hangings, pillows, umbrellas, home decoration products, etc.	Tomic, Rabbituu, Ile Home, Elephant, etc.
Clothing & Accessories	T-shirts, bags, ties, scarves, hats, hairpins, brooches, earrings, necklaces, etc.	Li Ning, Doodoo, Zhouliufu, Qeelin, etc.
Stationery	Notebooks, pens, bookmarks, etc.	Morning Glory, Lezai Wenchuang, German Pfeiffer, etc.
Toys & Games	Puzzles, dolls, Rubik's cubes, etc.	TOI, Art Fun, etc.
Product Packaging	Drink cups, food packaging, gift boxes, cosmetic packaging, etc.	Ying's, Corbett, Chappado, Shu Uemura, etc.

2.2 The current situation of the co-branding of ICH and brands

The current situation of the co-branding of ICH with brands is reflected in the fact that brands are becoming aware of the commercial value of ICH and are innovatively combining ICH elements with brand elements to enhance the competitiveness and cultural connotation of their brands.

In terms of form, there are two common forms of co-branding: the integration of non-heritage elements in brand product solutions and a series of activities between non-heritage culture and brands. In the form of integrating ICH elements into brand product solutions, many brands have incorporated ICH elements into their product designs and launched a series of ICH cultural creative products to enrich the cultural value of their products, thereby enhancing their competitiveness in the market and at the same time building up the brand's image of cultural care. The co-branding of ICH and brands refers to the various activities that many brands organise through co-branding with ICH-related organisations and groups, such as ICH exhibitions and creative product design competitions. As society pays more attention to the protection and development of ICH, the act of co-branding ICH with brands has received more widespread attention and recognition from the public.

In terms of policy, the government has increased its support in the protection and inheritance of ICH and encouraged enterprises to promote ICH through brand co-branding and other means, thereby promoting the dual-track development of enterprises and the ICH industry.

2.3 Design ideas for non-heritage cultural and creative products

The design of cultural and creative products is based on material, with spiritual culture as the core to develop original conceptual design^[3]. From the development of cultural and creative product development to the present, it is more important to study cultural needs in depth^[4].

In the process of product output, the three attributes of culture, creativity and product are indispensable. Cultural attributes are the basis for the design of non-heritage cultural and creative products. Brands should understand the cultural attributes of non-heritage and extract the appropriate cultural connotations, and use the perspective of product design to express the cultural connotations of non-heritage. Creative attributes are the core requirements for the widespread dissemination of ICH culture and for brand co-branding. This requires designers to look beyond the previous perspective of creative product design and explore more diversified expressions of ICH products, which means that designers can shift their focus from the external characteristics of ICH culture, such as patterns and colours, to the appropriate focus. The product is the ultimate expression of the cultural and creative attributes of the ICH, and should be chosen to best fit the cultural connotation and creativity.

This requires designers to have their own understanding of and grasp of ICH. The product design ideas of ICH and creativity are shown in Figure 1 below.

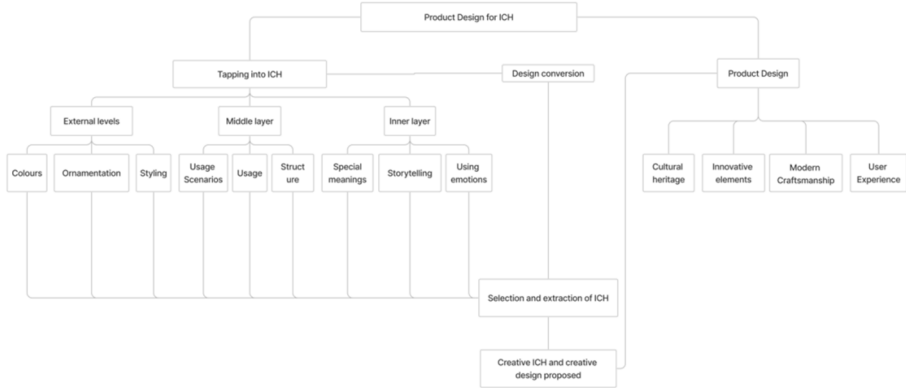


Fig. 1. Product Design Ideas for Non-Heritage Cultural Creations

The design of ICH products is divided into two main areas: cultural excavation and product design. In the area of cultural excavation, designers need to understand the outer, middle and inner layers of ICH culture, select and extract the culture, propose creative points for ICH design, and then design the output through product design methods. In the design of ICH products, the excavation of ICH culture and the design of the product are indispensable and should be carried out in an orderly manner, with an in-depth excavation of ICH culture in the early stages of design to lay a solid product tone for the later product design.

In terms of product design, the focus should be on cultural heritage and innovation, and on the basis of the protection and inheritance of ICH, the injection of innovative elements, the use of some modern technology, such as: modern digital printing and dyeing technology, to create some non-heritage cultural and creative products with a sense of the times and artistic value.

3 Analysis of ICH and brand co-branding - using Dunhuang as an example

Dunhuang is an important node on China's ancient Silk Road and one of the important birthplaces of Chinese culture, with a very strong historical and cultural heritage. Its intangible cultural heritage projects showcase the crystallised wisdom of the Chinese people and the diversity and uniqueness of ancient Chinese art. As of 2021, Dunhuang (including Jiuquan) has a total of 68 intangible cultural heritage protection projects at the municipal level and above, 123 intangible cultural heritage protection list projects at the county level, and 40 representative inheritors of intangible heritage projects.^[5] Dunhuang's intangible cultural heritage includes: Dunhuang opera, Dunhuang paper-cutting, Dunhuang dance, Dunhuang calligraphy, Dunhuang painting techniques, Dunhuang stone powder painting techniques, Dunhuang Mogao Cave legends, etc., involving traditional music, traditional dance, painting and carving, etc. Many elements of its intangible cultural heritage are used in the design of related cultural creations. Dunhuang's ICH is associated with brands in a wide range of categories, including creative home furnishings, apparel and accessories, stationery, toys and games, and product packaging.

3.1 Extraction of elements of Dunhuang's ICH and brand co-branding design

Dunhuang's ICH covers a wide range of areas and its symbolic language (including graphics, images, language, writing, architecture, dance, music, etc.) is extremely rich, which means that there is plenty of room for creative design and for co-branding with brands. (The extraction details of non heritage cultural and creative elements from Dunhuang are shown in Table 2 below) At the same time, the cultural value and historical heritage of Dunhuang's ICH is extremely high, and its visual presentation has a high aesthetic value, which in most cases results in a greater effect when co-branded with a brand.

Table 2. Extraction of Dunhuang cultural and creative related elements

Dunhuang's ICH	Extracted elements	Related application examples
Dunhuang Dance	Dance (lines, symbolic meanings)	Dunhuang dance octavo
Dunhuang Calligraphy	Characters	Dunhuang Lettering
Dunhuang Stone Painting Technique	Fonts	Dunhuang stationery gift box
Dunhuang Colour Sculpture	Writing conventions	Nine-coloured deer lamp

3.2 Innovative strategies for the design of Dunhuang heritage and brand co-branding

Dunhuang heritage elements are rich in symbolic language. In co-branding with brands, Dunhuang heritage elements collide with and integrate with the brand's tone, giving Dunhuang heritage a new form of presentation and enriching the brand's expressive elements, broadening the audience space for the brand and Dunhuang heritage culture.

3.2.1 Creating cultural, aesthetic and emotional value in products.

Non-heritage culture has high cultural, aesthetic and emotional value, and it is important to focus on these aspects of product expression when co-branding with brands. The cultural value of a product is reflected in its historical story and the knowledge and culture it contains; the aesthetic value of a product is reflected in its unique shape, ornamentation, colour, material and other visual elements ^[6], and the emotional value of a product refers to the user's need for the spiritual aspect of the product.

The King of Glory team is a game design team under Tencent, responsible for the design of the game King of Glory. In recent years, the team has been actively collaborating with the Dunhuang Research Institute, which has invariably broadened the scope of the game's IP and has been a progressive collaboration ^[7], reflecting its unique cultural, aesthetic and emotional value.

In the third collaboration between Dunhuang and King's Glory, King's Glory invited young dancer Hua Xiaoyi, associate professor of Chinese classical dance at the Beijing Dance Academy Ou Siwei, new media artist Lin Junting and digital sculpture artist Luo Qisheng to work with them on a number of trips to Dunhuang. The team has studied the production process of Dunhuang painted sculptures, read poems and historical legends about the intangible cultural heritage of Dunhuang, and developed the theme of 'Meet Hu Xuan'.

The Hu Xuan dance is one of the dances depicted in the Dunhuang frescoes and is described in a poem by the famous frontier poet Cen Shen: "A beautiful woman dances like a lotus flower, but the world has never seen her. The high hall is filled with red rug, try to dance a song like no other in the world." The theme skin "Meet Hu Xuan" vividly recreates the dance scene of Hu Xuan, using lotus elements to reflect the dancer's posture, and extracting the essence of Dunhuang colour sculpture production techniques and stone powder painting techniques (including colour and texture levels), which are visually reflected in the output, so that players can experience the Dunhuang skills while operating the game character. The game's characters are manipulated in a way that allows players to experience the subtleties of Dunhuang's skills.

In terms of value creation, the King's Glory team has accurately captured the characteristics of Dunhuang's Hu Whirlwind Dance, and the entire theme skin is colour and texture appropriate to the scene of the Kaiyuan period. The design of the Dunhuang cultural co-branding completes the 'visual elements - character construction - storytelling' progression, using Dunhuang culture to breathe new life into the characters.

3.2.2 Building product attributes.

A cultural association with a brand can generate buzz for the product in question. The buzz can only be generated by the creation of a tagline or slogan that incorporates cultural elements, which can bring the product closer to consumers and generate buzz about the product, attracting their attention.

In 2022, Shu Uemura collaborated with the Dunhuang Academy of Fine Arts to produce a range of colour-holding primers. On the one hand, it uses celebrity endorsement to drive the product's conversation flow, and on the other hand, it uses the artisanal spirit of Dunhuang's artisanal heritage and innovation, using "the art of holding colour, not dulling time" as the theme of the product, making the core features of the product more deeply felt.

The art of holding colour is the artistic adherence to the Dunhuang art of sculpting and stone painting, and Shu Uemura's use of Dunhuang's artisanship has resulted in a qualitative upgrade of the product's attributes, enriching the brand's connotations and attracting the attention of more consumers.

3.2.3 Multi-sensory experience with innovative products.

While the use of visual elements has been the main focus of products associated with ICH and brand co-branding, the collision of some ICH elements with the tone of the brand has also resulted in the design of co-branded products with multi-sensory experiences, allowing for more possibilities for the development of ICH co-branded products.

In 2020, Tea Baido, a beverage shop leading the way in Chinese tea drinking, launched the Dunhuang - Flying Sky Tea in association with the Dunhuang Museum.

The Dunhuang-Jiluo uses Da Hongpao as the base of the tea, and uses the Dunhuang elements of the world of bliss as the theme of the cup, with the rich aroma of Da Hongpao and the bliss of the cup reflecting each other, living up to the beauty of the earth. Mao Feng uses the art of the flying heaven in the Dunhuang element as the base of the tea, and the lingering aroma of Mao Feng's cinnamon tea echoes the delicate figure of the flying fairy, as if you are in a feast of Dunhuang dance.

The co-branded product with Dunhuang Museum cleverly integrates Dunhuang elements and the characteristics of tea, allowing consumers to experience Dunhuang culture from both visual and gustatory aspects, innovating the product experience of Dunhuang culture, further deepening the slogan of "leading the new style of Chinese tea", and broadening consumers' experience of Dunhuang culture. It also further deepens the slogan of "Leading the way in Chinese tea" and broadens consumers' experience of Dunhuang culture.

4 Empowering situation of ICH and brand co-branding

The development of the non-heritage industry should not only be limited to technical heritage, but also to the extraction of non-heritage elements, the integration and re-creation of non-heritage elements, and the establishment of a unique cultural style of non-heritage culture. The design of a brand can be co-branded with other brands to

make the existence of ICH richer and more sustainable. Bringing ICH back into life' is a clear direction for the current protection, inheritance, and development of intangible cultural heritage. The practice of joint branding of intangible cultural heritage and brands drives the inheritance and development of intangible cultural heritage^[8], enhances the added value of brands, and brings certain innovation opportunities to intangible cultural heritage. It is a successful attempt to innovate intangible cultural heritage.

4.1 The co-branding of ICH and brands as a means to promote the heritage and development of ICH

As an important part of traditional Chinese culture, ICH culture needs to be inherited and developed, but at the same time, the protection of ICH culture has not been given sufficient attention due to the low level of understanding and concern of the general public about ICH culture. The co-branding of ICH and brands raises the general public's awareness of ICH and its cultural, aesthetic and emotional value, and can inject new energy into ICH, stimulating its creativity and innovation, thus achieving an organic combination of ICH heritage and ICH innovation. Related co-branded brands (e.g. Shu Uemura, etc.), focus on the protection of ICH and use the influence of the brand to call on the general public to protect ICH.

The issue of the preservation of ICH faces both ontological and external problems. The ontological problems refer to the problems encountered in the inheritance regarding the inheritors and raw materials of the ICH items, while the external problems refer to the connection between the survival of the ICH items and the external environment^[9].

In the face of this problem, the co-branding of ICH with brands raises the visibility of the ICH in question and attracts more learners to the ICH. In the face of external problems, the co-branding of ICH with brands optimises the living environment of ICH and strengthens the links between ICH projects and the outside world. By making use of its own cultural characteristics and actively co-branding with relevant brands, it provides an alternative way for the general public to access ICH culture and makes it more tangible and easily understood and accepted by the general public, optimising the difficult access situation for the general public and increasing the audience for ICH culture, enabling ICH culture to move out of its geographical and access mode. It has also increased the audience reach of ICH culture, enabling ICH culture to move out of the "comfort zone" of the region and the way it is accessed, and strengthening the connection between ICH projects and the outside world.

Whether analysed in terms of the ontological or external issues of non-heritage heritage, the method of co-branding ICH with brands has to a large extent driven up the momentum of the heritage of non-heritage culture and empowered ICH. Mr Xu Yibi once advocated "restoring and rebuilding traditional, elegant and healthy lifestyles"^[10] and this is precisely the first step that should be taken in the transmission of ICH culture. Nowadays, due to changes in the social environment, the importance of many non-heritage cultural items is decreasing and their heritage is facing great difficulties. The many categories in which ICH is co-branded with brands have led to a renewed

interest in ICH among the general public and a certain degree of acceptance of the new lifestyle constructed from the perspective of ICH.

4.2 Non-heritage culture and brand co-branding enhance the added value of the brand

Brand value includes its attributes, quality, class, culture and personality. By co-branding with ICH, brands integrate the history, culture and art of ICH into the design, product development and marketing of the brand, enhancing the cultural connotation of the brand and the depth and breadth of the brand image, strengthening consumers' perception of the brand with the infectious power of ICH, and helping the formation of brand value.

4.3 The co-branding of ICH and brands empowers the innovative development of ICH

The innovative development of ICH culture has always been a major difficulty in the development of ICH projects. Internally, the development of ICH is relatively homogeneous and can only be carried out in the same way as before. Externally, the development of ICH is limited in terms of the carrier and venue, which is usually resting on ICH museums and related instruments. With the emergence of the co-branding of ICH with brands, more possibilities for the development of ICH have emerged.

Due to the rising popularity of co-branded products in recent years, many brands are competing to collaborate with outstanding ICH, and the connotations of ICH have been further developed. Due to the demand for co-branding from brands, the development potential of ICH is constantly being exploited and the ways of expression are becoming more and more diversified. Brand co-branding can inject new impetus into the cultural tourism industry by co-branding tourism products and itineraries with the theme of non-heritage culture, allowing users to experience the charm of non-heritage culture in depth and promoting the development of the non-heritage cultural tourism industry.

The emergence of ICH and brand co-branding reflects the great leap from the inheritance of ICH to innovative design, and from ICH traditional culture to ICH IP^[11], and the occurrence of co-branding with brands further empowers the innovative development of ICH IP, giving ICH a broader platform for development and more diversified resources.

5 Conclusion

The co-branding of ICH with brands has not only brought the distance between ICH culture and the general public closer, but also raised the awareness of the general public on the protection and inheritance of ICH culture, and increased the possibility of multi-directional development of ich culture, opening up a new situation of innovative development of non-heritage. However, on the whole, there are still some brands that lack in-depth understanding and knowledge of ICH culture, and fail to deeply explore

and pass on the connotation and essence of ICH culture, resulting in ICH culture simply being embedded in product design. Nowadays, at this stage of rapid development of ICH and brand co-branding, ICH should not give up its own characteristics in order to meet the needs of ICH brands. The co-branding approach is always a supplementary option to the development of non-heritage culture, but the core of the development of non-heritage culture is still its own cultural connotation. In the process of co-branding with a brand, the cultural, aesthetic and emotional values of the culture should be given full play, and the platform provided by the brand should be used to let more people understand and love the culture. As a brand owner, you should show your respect for ICH and dig deeper into the connotations of ICH, so that the co-branded brand and ICH can develop together.

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