

Research on the Design of Cultural and Creative Products for the Journey to the West of Huaguo Mountain in Lianyungang

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Abstract:

Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain has a strong culture of Journey to the West, which is the background of one of China's four masterpieces-Journey to the West. In today's booming tourism industry, cultural and creative products, as an important carrier of regional culture and traditional art, play an indispensable role in showing local characteristics and passing on cultural heritage. The purpose of this study is to explore the current situation and development trend of the cultural and creative design of Journey to the West in Huaguo Mountain, Lianyungang, and how to use innovative design concepts to design creative products with both recognition and market competitiveness based on respecting and protecting the traditional culture, to inject new vitality into the cultural and tourism industry of Huaguo Mountain and even Lianyungang City as a whole.

Keywords:

Journey to the West Culture, Tourism, Cultural and Creative Products

1. Introduction

Journey to the West, one of the four great masterpieces of China, is an artistic treasure in the treasury of Chinese literature. Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain is the background of Journey to the West and the birthplace of the Journey to the West culture, with a deep cultural heritage and historical legends. As a national 5A-level scenic area, it is blessed with natural landscape, which attracts a large number of tourists to visit Lianyungang has become a cultural card that conveys its unique charm to the world, "Huaguo Mountain, Waterfall Cave".

In recent years, as the level of social development improves, people's life needs change, the tourism industry is booming, and consumers' demands for travelling experience are also rising. Cultural and creative products, as an important carrier of regional culture and traditional art, play an indispensable role in displaying local characteristics and inheriting cultural charms. For Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain, how to combine the culture of Journey to the West with local characteristics, and design can both contain traditional culture and meet modern aesthetic needs of

cultural and creative products, has become an important proposition to promote the upgrading of the tourism industry, and highlight the cultural soft power of the city.

This study aims to deeply explore the status quo and development trend of the cultural and creative product design of Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain West Tourism Culture, and to design a series of cultural and creative products with both creativity and market competitiveness through innovative design concepts on the basis of respecting and protecting traditional culture. Combined with an in-depth examination of the scenic area's natural landscape and human history, we refine its unique cultural elements and skillfully integrate them into the product design. We believe that through this series of research and practice, we can provide practical help for Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain and even Lianyungang's tourism industry.

2. Background and Significance of the Study

Journey to the West, compiled by the Ming Dynasty novelist Wu Chengen, is one of the four great masterpieces of China. Since the Ming and Qing dynasties, the research on the culture of Journey to the West has never ceased. In the past two decades, the national research on the Journey to the West culture has also been in progress, only the funding of the Journey to the West thematic research projects will be as high as more than 10, and various types of research grants are also abundant. 1996, the first Journey to the West academic symposium was held in Taiyuan, and Lianyungang, as a Journey to the West book place, has also been held a number of Journey to the West cultural high-level forums since the end of the twentieth century, the successive organisation of the Since the end of the 20th century, Lianyungang has held the Journey to the West Cultural Festival, which has been successfully held for twenty-three times so far, highlighting its central position in the cultural inheritance of Journey to the West. [1]

Huaguo Mountain is one of the important backgrounds in the Journey to the West, and there have been many different opinions about where it belongs. At present, in addition to Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain, there are also Jiangxi Jinggangshan Huaguo Mountain, Luoyang Huaguo Mountain, Henan Huaguo Mountain and so on. [2] However, after some rigorous examination, Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain is recognised as the closest to the real prototype of Huaguo Mountain in the book because of its high degree of conformity to the original description. 1977, the scholar Mr Li Hongfu published a monograph on Huaguo Mountain, mentioning for the first time that the mountain was the first to be described in the book. The idea that the prototype of Mount Huaguo in Journey to the West was Mount Yuntai in Lianyungang was subsequently reproduced in 1978 in the Journal of Xuzhou Normal College and in the Jiangsu academic journal Jianghai Journal, which was highly recognised and resonated with the academic community.

Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area, as the "hometown of the Monkey King", has a unique advantage in the cultural industry of Journey to the West, but Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area's popularity and tourist attendance in the whole country are not satisfactory. According to statistics, Lianyungang received 6.49 million tourists during the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day in 2023, but the number of tourists in Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area was only 303,300, accounting for 4.6% of the city's tourists. Facing this situation, Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area needs to seize the opportunity brought by the super IP of "Journey to the West Culture", and maximise the presentation and release of Journey to the West

Culture as the core element. Innovative promotion through cultural and creative products.

This project aims to promote the transformation and upgrading of the tourism industry and to meet the growing demand of contemporary tourists for personalised and immersive experiences. Therefore, this topic will feature the Journey to the West culture, in-depth investigation of Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area and the Journey to the West culture of the depth of the integration of cultural and creative product design, aimed at the use of cultural and creative products to strengthen the brand image of the scenic area, enhance its popularity and reputation, through the wide dissemination of cultural and creative products, so that more tourists in-depth understanding of scenic areas and culture, and enhance the tourists' sense of participation and sense of experience, which will promote Lianyungang's tourism industry economic prosperity and development, and achieve a win-win situation of cultural heritage and economic benefits development of Lianyungang tourism, and realise the win-win situation of cultural heritage and economic benefits.

3. The Origins of the Journey to the West Culture and Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain

3.1. Overview of Western Culture

Journey to the West is not only a literary masterpiece, but also a profound cultural treasure trove, carrying the crystallisation of the profound thoughts and cultural essence of the Chinese nation. The Journey to the West culture is derived from it, covering many fields such as religion, philosophy, art, folklore, etc., which has had a profound impact on Chinese and even world culture.

The characters, plot ideas, and allegorical symbols in the work all reflect deep cultural heritage. The wisdom of the Monkey King, the compassion of the Tang Monk, the courage of Piggy's simplicity, and the loyalty of Monk Sha's perseverance not only constitute a vivid portrait in the literary hall, but also the embodiment of human virtues such as wisdom, courage, loyalty, and perseverance, and reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of human nature. It carries profound social value and educational significance. Through the story of the four masters and disciples who overcome the thorny path and finally obtain the true scriptures, it celebrates the noble spirit of firm conviction, fearlessness in challenges and cooperation. At the same time, the book's analysis of good and evil, truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness guides readers to think about the nature of human nature and social justice.

Journey to the West culture is a part of the excellent traditional Chinese culture. The spirit of yearning for freedom and resistance against autocracy it conveys not only embodies the wisdom and creativity of the ancient Chinese people but also leaves valuable spiritual wealth for future generations. In today's multi-cultural intertwined era, through continuous excavation and innovation, the Journey to the West Culture continues to blossom on the stage of world culture with its unique cultural charm.

3.2. The Connection and Significance of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruits and the Journey to the West

Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain is geographically closer to the prototype of Journey to the West. Wu Cheng'en wrote in the book "There is a country overseas, named Aorai country. The country near the sea, there is a mountain in the sea, called Huaguo

Mount.” [3] Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain, east of the Huanghai Sea, and west of the Yuntai Mountains, is geographically more in line with the description of the book. There are many attractions related to the book in the scenic area, such as Feilai Stone, South Heavenly Gate, Water Curtain Cave, Seventy-two Caves, Nuwa’s Relic Stone, Sanyuan Palace, Eighteen Discs and so on. Its existence not only provides a realistic geographic location for “Journey to the West”, but also gives this fictional world real support, which makes the literary work and natural landscape complement each other and attracts countless literati and writers to come to admire it.

The author’s place of origin also shows a deep connection with Lianyungang. Although he lived in Huai’an for a long time, Wu Cheng’en was originally from Lianshui, which was under the jurisdiction of Haizhou, today’s Lianyungang, many times before the Ming Dynasty. He called himself “Yuzhou Mountain Man”, where “Yuzhou” means today’s Yuntai Mountain in Lianyungang, indicating his love for the area and his identification with the local culture. In addition, the stories depicted in the book also coincide with some of the folklore of Lianyungang, for example, the image of the Tang Monk in the book, a righteous and kind-hearted man, is inspired by the legend of Chen Guangrui, from which the inspiration for the creation of the book and the prototype was obtained.

To sum up, the association between Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain and Journey to the West is not only a perfect fusion of geographical location and literature, but also a realistic portrayal of culture and imagination. Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain, whether in the natural scenery or historical heritage, has a unique value that other regions do not have, and has become an unrepeatable holy land.

4. Lianyungang Huaguo of Cultural and Creative Design Status and Existing Problems

In our research, we found that there are some problems with some cultural and creative products in the Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area at present. As a national 5A-level scenic area, Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area still has a development gap that cannot be ignored compared with other famous tourist cities in China. At the same time, the design and development of cultural and creative products in the scenic area are still insufficient, now the market phenomenon of serious homogenisation, single category, rough craftsmanship, etc., and the Journey to the West Culture, as the biggest feature and advantage of the scenic area, has not been well presented. This status quo not only weakened the public’s attraction and interest in Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain’s cultural and creative products but also directly led to the failure of cultural and creative products to play their due market potential, missing an important opportunity to maximise the economic benefits for the scenic area.

(1) Cultural and creative products lack cultural connotations. Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain is blessed with natural resources and the cultural roots of the Journey to the West, nurturing the infinite possibilities of developing cultural products of the Journey to the West. However, some cultural and creative products of Huaguo Mountain in Lianyungang do not make full use of and reflect the connotation of the Journey to the West in the development process, and neglect the in-depth interpretation and communication of the Journey to the Western culture, which results in the value of the product’s cultural connotation not being effectively embodied. [4]

(2) A single Western culture propaganda. Journey to the West culture is the soul and essence of Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain, but the scenic area for the Journey to the West cultural excavation is still thin. Creative products in the scenic area rely excessively on the Monkey King as a single image of the other colourful storylines and deep cultural connotations of little, which not only restricts the creative boundaries of creative products but also fails to fully demonstrate the wisdom, courage and humanism contained in the Journey to the West culture. Journey to the West culture, covering the hardships and growth on the way to fetch the scriptures, the complex relationship between man, God and the devil intertwined with the three worlds, as well as a profound insight into human nature and reflection, is not only a treasure of traditional Chinese culture but also a source of power to inspire the world to move forward, the cultural heritage and spiritual connotation of the Journey to the West culture still needs to be further refined and promoted.

(3) Severe similarity of cultural and creative products. After a field trip to the cultural and creative sales area of the Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area in Lianyungang, it was found that the current variety of cultural and creative products is relatively simple, with dolls in the image of the Monkey King, keychains, and toys with golden bands being commonplace. These products are similar in design, colour and even material. The selling point is ambiguous, the production process is rough, lack of innovation and personalised expression, and the use value of some products is also poor quality, resulting in the loss of the product that should be attractive and innovative vitality so that some tourists lose the desire to buy. [5]

(4) The integration of cultural and creative products with scenic spots is not high. As the birthplace of the Journey to the West culture, Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain should be a model of seamless integration of cultural and creative products and tourism experience. [6] However, the current cultural and creative products only focus on the presentation of the Journey to the West culture one-sidedly, neglecting the in-depth integration with the natural landscape and human history of the scenic spot. Although the products in the image of the Monkey King can be seen, they are disconnected from the Huaguo Mountain scenic spot, and the connection between cultural and creative products and the scenic spot seems loose, lacking in intrinsic synergy and symbiosis, and ignoring the practical application value of cultural and creative products in tourism services. The scenic spot does not make full use of the advantages of cultural and creative products, and it is difficult to leave a deep impression on tourists, thus losing the promotional value of cultural and creative products.

(5) Single channel for dissemination and promotion. In the era of developed information, the cultural and creative products of Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain are still in a single state in terms of publicity channels. In addition to the relevant selling points within the scenic area, online promotion is insufficient, and there is a lack of diversified and precise promotion modes. Although the scenic spot has opened new media platforms such as the WeChat official account, Tiktok and Xiaohongshu, it has not yet fully mobilised these platforms for effective dissemination. Aiming at the interest preferences and reception habits of different consumer groups, a series of personalised promotional activities can be carried out, such as creative short videos, interactive topic challenges, etc., to tell the story of Huaguo Mountain in Lianyungang in a novel way, and to enhance the popularity and influence of cultural and creative products. This not only can stimulate the curiosity and purchase desire of potential customers, but also deepen the knowledge and emotional connection of tourists to the

culture of Huaguo Mountain, and ultimately realise the double harvest of the brand value of cultural and creative products and scenic spots.

5. Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Tourism Cultural and Creative Product Solutions

Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain, as a national 5A-level scenic area and the hometown of the Monkey King, is rich in natural resources and cultural connotations. To further enhance the tourism charm of the scenic spot and the market competitiveness of the cultural and creative products, this study will be based on the analysis of the current status quo of the cultural and creative products, propose a series of design strategies, and through the combination of culture and innovation, dedicated to creating cultural and creative products with distinctive regional characteristics and recognisability.

(1) Deeply address the culture of Journey to the West and skillfully apply its elements. As an artistic treasure of Chinese culture, the philosophical, artistic and educational values of the Journey to the West culture are a symbol of the wisdom and charm of Chinese civilisation. Based on local natural resources, historical relics and folklore, we can deeply explore the storyline and spiritual connotation of the Journey to the West culture, extract the cultural elements and integrate them with the cultural and creative products, and design cultural and creative products that have cultural deposits and highlight the characteristics of the scenic spot. This move further enriches the cultural system of Lianyungang, making it a cultural and tourism business card combining traditional culture and modern innovation, and leading tourists to enter a feast of Western culture integrating the senses of sight, touch and sound. [7]

(2) Creative style innovation, unique to show regional characteristics. At present, most of the styles of tourism creative products for keychains, dolls, stationery sets, postcards, etc., are the same everywhere, with only a slight change in the pattern, the lack of innovation and regional characteristics, it is difficult to meet the needs of tourists psychological. Lianyungang, known as “China's crystal capital” reputation, crystal resources are unique, can be crystal and the Journey to the West cultural and creative products for the fusion, which can not only be achieved in the material and other areas of the distinction between cultural and creative products but also in the visual and tactile sense to give tourists a brand new experience, a two-in-one enhancement of the Journey to the West of Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain culture and the Lianyungang crystal industry, the Journey to the West. Culture and Lianyungang crystal industry double visibility, highlighting the unique regional culture.

In addition, Lianyungang is also a seaside city, where marine resources are equally abundant. The Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area is located here, which is beautifully situated by the mountains and the sea. Therefore, we can also make use of local natural resources to create cultural and creative products. For example, shells can be used for the creation of cultural and creative products, outlining the story of Journey to the West and the landscape of Huaguo Mount on the shells, giving tourists a visual and tactile novelty experience with another material to stimulate the sense of tourism experience and the desire to buy cultural and creative products. This move not only promotes the culture of Journey to the West of Huaguo Mountain in Lianyungang but also brings the sea charm of Lianyungang to the world. Cultural and creative products

maximise their promotional role, attracting tourists from all over the world to come and stop, thus realising the double benefits of economy and culture.

(3) The close integration of cultural and creative products with scenic spots.

There are quite a lot of storylines and character connections between Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain and Journey to the West. In addition to the famous Water Curtain Cave, there are also 72 caves, Nuwa's leftover stones, Tang Monk's Cliff, Sanyuan Palace, South Heavenly Gate, Feilai Stone, 18 discs and other attractions, each of which is a portrayal of the Journey to the West cultural story and a source of creative inspiration. Cultural and creative products should break through the limitations of the single presentation of the classic image of the Monkey King, and should deeply integrate the story of the Journey to the West with the characteristic landscape of the scenic spot, extract the design elements, and design cultural and creative products that can not only highlight the cultural connotation of the Journey to the West, but also express the regional characteristics of Huaguo Mountain in Lianyungang. Through these cultural and emotional integration of cultural and creative products, not only can make the scenic area's regional characteristics and cultural identity more distinct, but also can be significantly differentiated from other tourist areas. Telling the story of the Journey to the West, promoting the characteristics of the scenic spot, and achieving the double publicity of the scenic spot and culture. [8]

(4) Building an all-round marketing matrix. Lianyungang has been walking on the forward path of promoting the culture of Journey to the West. Since 2003, Lianyungang has held the Journey to the West Cultural Festival every year to promote the culture of Journey to the West, in addition to activities such as the Journey to the West Carnival and the Journey to the West Bookstore. On this basis, we can open a separate window for promoting cultural and creative products at the event site, and expand the scope of promotion of cultural and creative products through clever implantation and promotion of cultural and creative products through the event. In addition, online promotion is equally important. Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Scenic Area can make use of the new media social platform to understand the public's demand for Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain's tourism cultural and creative products through research, and capture the psychological needs of consumers to create personalised products to meet the diversified needs of different groups. The implementation of an online and offline dual-track strategy, and the formation of a three-dimensional communication mode, to maximise the publicity effect, so that the charm of Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain spread to all corners of the world to attract global attention to focus on this.

6. Conclusions

Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain has unique natural resources and cultural connotations, and has a broad development trend in the development of the Journey to the West cultural tourism and creative products. Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain Journey to the West Cultural Tourism Creative Product Design is not only a look back to traditional culture, but also a bold attempt to the spirit of innovation. Continue to dig deeper into the essence of the Journey to the West culture, give the story a new way of presentation through creative products, and convey the unique charm of the Journey to the West culture and Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain. [9]

In the future, we will continue to combine the culture of Journey to the West with modern aesthetics with more diversified design ideas and expressions, and create

personalised and recognisable cultural and creative products according to consumers' needs. Let the story of Lianyungang Huaguo Mountain enter thousands of households so that every visitor can feel the unique charm of the Journey to the West culture and Huaguo Mountain, and let the Journey to the West culture continue to blossom in the cultural context of the new era.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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