

Research on the Development and Promotion of Museum's Cultural and Creative Products: A Case Study of Dunhuang Museum Cultural and Creative Products

Jing Ma^{1,*}, Xue Han², Mengdi Hu³

¹Yunnan Arts University, Yunnan 650500, China;

²Shanghai Maritime University, Shanghai 201306, China;

³Wuhan Conservatory of Music, Wuhan 430060 China.

Abstract. Museum, as a concentrated embodiment of world civilization and national culture, condense local history, culture, and spiritual civilization. In recent years, cultural and creative products in museum sectors have effectively expanded cultural and creative industries. Within this context, we took Dunhuang-related cultural and creative products as an example and made a brief introduction to the background of these products. Then we selected some famous museums from China or foreign countries and compared the creative and cultural products designed by Dunhuang Museum with these selected museums using various research methods, such as the analysis of online shopping data, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. Finally, we concluded the problems existing in those Dunhuang-themed products and provided several countermeasures, including 1) focusing on innovation and integrating its own cultural characteristics into the cultural and creative products; 2) adhering to public demand-oriented development strategies; 3) defining the design orientation of cultural and creative products; and 4) improving product quality and marketing capability.

1 Introduction

Benefiting from the development of contemporary society, people's pursuit of spiritual culture is progressively increasing while their material demands are continuously satisfied. The museum is gradually known to the public for its rich cultural connotation. As a carrier of cultural exchange between museums and consumers, museum cultural and creative products contain cultural attributes different from ordinary commodities. Nevertheless, the museum's cultural and creative market has shown a series of unfavorable phenomena represented by shoddy products, homogenization, and polarization of products. In reaction to these phenomena, it is imperative to promote the development of museum cultural and creative industries. The key lies in catering to consumers' purchase demands, strengthening the refinement of cultural connotation, and improving the artistic quality, practicability, or collection value of the cultural and creative products.

2 Overview of Dunhuang-themed Cultural and Creative Products

2.1 Background

Dunhuang culture, which has been passed down for thousands of years, embodies the Chinese art form of early

Buddhist culture. The cultural and creative products designed by Dunhuang Museum adhere to "culture" as the foundation and "creativity" as the core [4]. The product development of these creative products is not only based on Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes but also introduces diversified fashionable styles represented by Cyberpunk and the Renaissance.

2.2 Features of the Cultural and Creative Products of the Dunhuang Museum

Through co-branded cooperation with diversified IPs, such as current popular variety shows, fast fashion brands, games, and beauty makeup brands, the cultural and creative products of the Dunhuang Museum closely conform to the fashion trend, thus enabling Dunhuang cultural relics to flood the screen in a "younger" image. To put it concretely, in the field of variety shows, Dunhuang Flying Apsaras, for example, in conjunction with the popular variety *Street Dance of China*, launched the co-branded skateboard *Flying Apsaras* (or *Feitian*) and finger skateboard pendants. Meanwhile, it introduced exclusive customized star gifts, such as the same kind of eye shade ever used by Lay Zhang, to make more star fans and netizens pay attention to Dunhuang culture. In the field of beauty makeup, Dunhuang Museum has produced co-branded products with a series of well-known beauty makeup brands. For example, apart from cooperating with Carlsan to launch the co-branded colorful lip-glaze

*731026594@qq.com

eyebrow pencil, eye shadow, and high-gloss eyebrow pencil, it also launched the co-branded embossed blush, lip-nourishing-and-moisturizing lipstick with Judydoll. In the field of games, Dunhuang Museum launched an incredible game linkage activity with *AniPop* with the theme of “National-style *AniPop* with Happiness Echoing for a Millennium”. Moreover, Dunhuang Museum has launched co-branded products with other IPs, such as the joint Bluetooth speaker studio squawk box launched in cooperation with *Gravastar*, and the co-branded Cyberpunk-style Xiberia gaming headphones.

Dunhuang Museum also launched targeted cultural and creative products in combination with the current popular cultural phenomena. For example, in the context of “the craze for graduate school” and “the craze for civil service examinations”, it launched a series of popular cultural and creative products, such as the “Worship to Test God” medal, “Mascot to Pray for Good Luck” medal, pre-exam “High-score Admission” medal, post-exam “Blissful Life” medal, “High-score Pass” socks, “Nine-Colored Deer” series of cultural gifts, vehicle-mounted Ping An Fu sachet, ancient-style blessing perfume satchel, vehicle-mounted amulet, etc.

More importantly, Dunhuang Museum persistently upholds the concept of combining traditional culture regarding the design of cultural and creative products. For example, it launched a variety of products that ingeniously incorporate traditional cultural elements, encompassing the comb set with blue-bird archaistic jewelry, the folding fan with the shooting of Han Chinese clothing, the

Dunhuang cultural and creative sachet, the versatile waistbands, Tiger-year face masks with the theme of the twelve Chinese zodiac signs, the Tiger-year key chain, and Tiger-year faddish socks, as well as the water-based fire extinguishers with Dunhuang art elements.

2.3 Analysis of the Key Data of the Questionnaire Survey on Dunhuang Cultural and Creative Products

Questionnaires were distributed to further understand consumer psychology and analyze cultural and creative products from different perspectives. Specifically, the questionnaire includes a total of 12 questions, which can be divided into multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and fill-in-the-blank questions. As for the specific content, it involves a series of aspects, including the basic information of the respondent’s gender, income, and education, their understanding of cultural and creative products, the investigation of their purchase situation, the investigation of cultural and creative products and in-depth culture, the investigation of their purchasing habits and type-oriented preferences, the investigation of their opinions on co-branded cultural and creative products, the investigation of the constraints and potential problems of cultural and creative products, etc. A total of 2,002 samples were collected in this questionnaire, of which 1,803 were valid samples, with the respondents mainly young people aged 18 to 25.

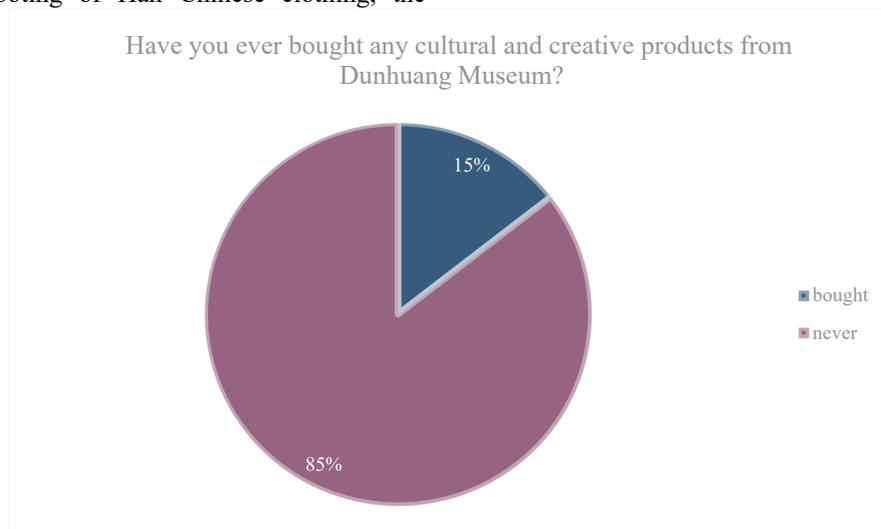


Fig. 1. Purchase of cultural and creative products

It can be seen from the above picture that some people have bought the cultural and creative products of Dunhuang Museum mainly through online channels. In addition to the cultural and creative products of Dunhuang

Museum, they also bought cultural and creative products produced by the Palace Museum, Sanxingdui Museum, and other museums.

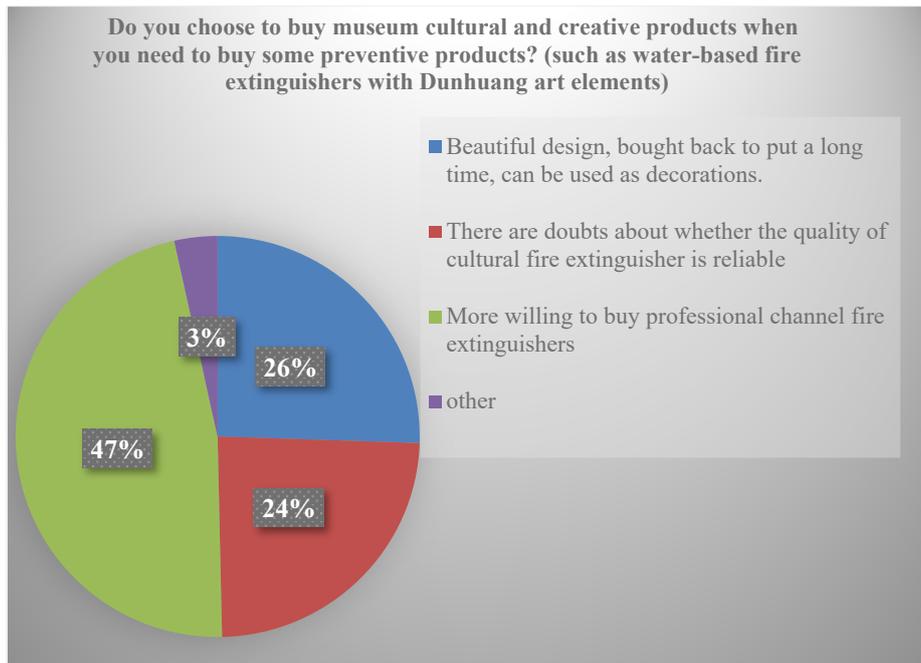


Fig. 2. Creative preventive cultural and creative product purchase needs

This question aims to analyze the psychology of consumers through the water-based fire extinguishers with Dunhuang art elements. Given the sharp-cut novelty of the cultural innovations used in the fire extinguishers, only 30%

of the respondents said they were willing to buy the water-based fire extinguisher with Dunhuang art elements for its unique cultural design elements.

Will you pay attention to Dunhuang culture because you bought cultural and creative products co-branded with Dunhuang Museum? (like skateboards and cereal)

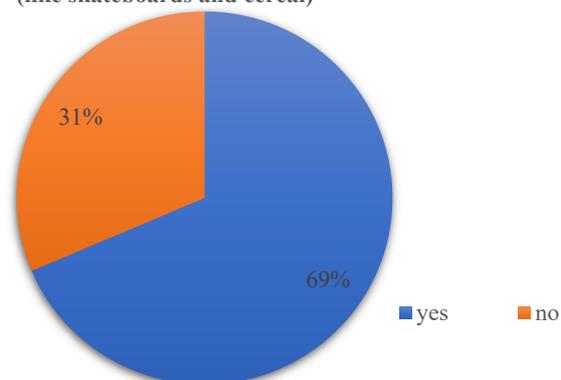


Fig. 3. Through cultural and creative products to understand the relevant culture

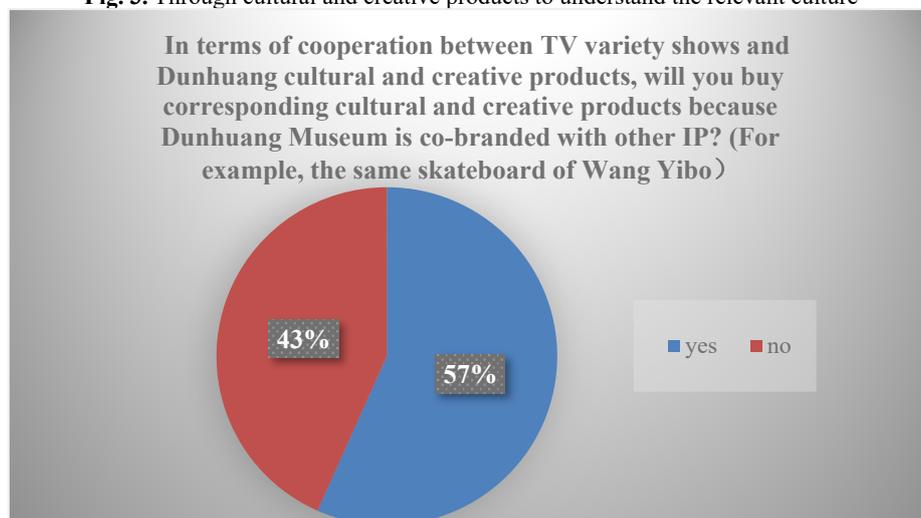


Fig. 4. Dunhuang cultural and creative products and other IP

In the questionnaire survey, more than half of the respondents were willing to buy the celebrity-copycatting cultural and creative products, while 56% of the respondents were willing to buy the IP co-branded cultural and creative products. Additionally, 69% of the respondents indicated that they would pay close attention to Dunhuang culture due to their purchase of cultural and creative products co-branded with Dunhuang.

Through sorting out the key data collected by questionnaire survey, it is demonstrated that many consumers of cultural and creative products do not aim at the practicality of products and that cultural and creative elements and unconventional cultural and creative presentation are important driving forces for consumers to make purchase decisions. Whilst the celebrity effect and fan culture create incredible consumer purchasing power, celebrity endorsements or the release of celebrity-copycatting products can also encourage some consumers to make many purchases, and further enable them to actively forward relevant information to the fan community, the WeChat moments, and Weibo. Briefly, the multi-cultural transmission model prevailing in the current Internet age is of great referential significance to the promotion of cultural and creative products of Dunhuang Museum.

3 Comparison between Cultural and Creative Products of Dunhuang Museum and Those of Other Domestic and Foreign Museums

3.1 Foreign Museums

The cultural and creative products of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, similar to those of other museums, can be roughly divided into three categories: practical products, collectible products, and creative products. The difference is that its cultural and creative products attach great importance to the design with art as the core of products, and the design style fits well with the products. On the other hand, its creative products can be distinguished by artistic themes, such as Van Gogh series silk scarves, nightlights, vehicle-mounted aromatherapy, and Mondrian series mobile phone shells, necklaces, tissue boxes, etc.

Louvre Museum is best at integrating the transformed Mona Lisa into various cultural and creative products. For example, Mona Lisa's smile can be seen in numerous products such as Rubik's Cube, mugs, etc. Its most famous product is a guidebook for children, in which the cat in Mona Lisa's arms is like a symbol for children, guiding them to explore the Louvre jointly with Mona Lisa.

British Museum is a comprehensive museum with the longest history and the largest scale in the world. [1] Featuring flexible and changeable cultural and creative products, it will launch different cultural and creative products with festive characteristics according to Christmas, Easter, and other festivals. In addition, the British Museum will design brand-new cultural and creative products in line with different short-term special exhibitions. The British Museum will design creative

products to suit the themes of short-term exhibitions. For example, its Manga exhibition used Japanese manga to introduce visitors to oriental culture through the presentation of sandwiches made from east Asian ingredients and roast duck burritos. Regarding the development of overseas cultural and creative industries, the British Museum pays great attention to suiting its products to local conditions. For example, its folding fans, red envelopes, and other products launched in China's Tmall incorporated distinctive Chinese characteristics. The reason lies in that the British Museum authorizes IP to Chinese companies for secondary creation and development. Meanwhile, it strictly controls the design scheme of these products, so that overseas products reflect the cultural connotation of the British Museum based on fulfilling the demands of the local market.

3.2 Domestic Museums

The cultural and creative products of Suzhou Museum reflect unique creativity and profound cultural connotation. Its most unique product is the "seed of wisteria planted by Wen Zhengming", which is the top-one treasure of its Cultural and Creative Store. More than 480 years ago, Wen Zhengming, one of the gifted scholars in Wuzhong, planted a Chinese wisteria for his friend Wang Xianchen. This wisteria is the "Wen Wisteria" in Suzhou Museum today. Every year, after the full-blossom period of "Wen Wisteria", Suzhou Museum will put its seeds on shelves for sale. With the implied meaning of continuing the context, it can constantly attract people's attention and be sold out in no time.

With the popularity of National Treasure, Treasure in the Forbidden City, and numerous other well-known variety show, more young people are willing to learn more about the Forbidden City culture. Especially, the Treasure in the Forbidden City jointly produced by the Palace Museum and Beijing TV Station has set off an upsurge concerning the Palace Museum for the current cultural propaganda of the Palace Museum. In addition to the fan groups of artists participating in each episode, the program itself also attracts many fans who are mainly young people. From the perspective of content, the program not only adopts a unique way to promote the storyline but also invites authoritative experts to explain relevant knowledge. These characteristics make each episode of the program bring the audience a visual feeling that every viewing will bring discoveries, striving to make more people have a deeper understanding of the Palace Museum culture. Moreover, in terms of cultural and creative industries, the Palace Museum is unswervingly committed to creating more value by shaping the inherent connotation of cultural relics. For example, compared with simply copying and pasting patterns, the Palace Museum always incorporates out-of-the-ordinary ideas into cultural and creative products, such as the emperor's One-Day Series and the Imperial Cat in the Palace Museum Series.

With the advent of summer, Yunnan Provincial Museum not only launched "Grenade" and "Golden-winged Bird" ice creams but also enhanced the interactive feeling of cultural and creative products by combining the

grabbing experience of the “clip doll machine”. At the beginning of 2022, Yunnan Provincial Museum launched the Seeking the Truth in the Ancient Dian Kingdom, a live-action role-playing (LARP) game with the ancient Dian Kingdom as the background, thereby greatly enhancing the interestingness of the offline visiting experience of Yunnan Provincial Museum.

4 Problems Exposed by Cultural and Creative Products of Dunhuang Museum

The author argues that Dunhuang Museum inevitably exposed some shortcomings regarding the operation and design of cultural and creative products, which hindered the effective dissemination of Dunhuang art to a certain extent.

4.1 Design Lacking in Originality and Designability

Most cultural and creative product designs mechanically apply the same pattern with invariable elements and styles. For instance, in the Dunhuang Museum’s online store on Taobao, the design of some hats and jelly bags lacks originality, with only simple illustrations being printed on them. Even the designs of these patterns are too simple to be associated with Dunhuang culture. In addition, most cultural and creative products use elements of lions, flying fairies, and nine-colored deer, as well as similar design styles. For example, the patterns on the cup and the blanket are very similar to the cover of the notebook. To some extent, these shortcomings reduce the value of products and the consuming desires of buyers.

4.2 Excessively Limited Product Design Scope and Unclear Product Positioning

The second problem exposed by Dunhuang Museum lies in the limitation of design themes and unclear product positioning. Specifically, the murals in the Mogao Grottoes are the most prestigious in Dunhuang art. Nevertheless, the similarity in themes and content of murals essentially reduces the possibility of diversified design of cultural and creative products.

On the other hand, there are inevitably some products with zero total sales in Dunhuang Museum, such as e-sports headphones, tents, and other equipment. As the case stands, the consumer groups for which these functional products are aimed typically attach more importance to the professionalism of the products. For this reason, even with the support of cultural creativity, it is difficult for these products to achieve a breakthrough in sales. In other words, zero sales volume is the outcome of unclear product design positioning.

4.3 Uneven Product Quality and Marketing Level of Museums

The third problem exposed by Dunhuang Museum lies in the single marketing level and the chain reaction caused

by product quality problems. In the current era of streaming media, marketing and promotion are the all-important key to the success of products, followed by product quality and design. The marketing strategy of Dunhuang Museum presents a relatively single feature. Although it registered relevant accounts on social media platforms represented by Xiaohongshu and Weibo, it did not attract many fans, with its published content drawing little attention from others. Overall, it still reflects a limited level of publicity.

Given that quality conformance is the basic guarantee for the success of all products, Dunhuang Museum shall stringently ensure the quality of cultural and creative products. For example, in the Dunhuang Museum’s online store on Taobao, many consumers in the online-evaluation section of a sachet reported that the workmanship of the product was very rough, while some consumers in the online-evaluation section of a mobile phone shell reported that the quality control of the product had great problems and pointed out that it was disrespectful to Dunhuang culture. Simply put, quality-related problems will lead to the loss of consumers, disappoint consumers who are keen on Dunhuang culture, and even generate negative impacts on the image of Dunhuang Museum to some extent.

5 Countermeasures for the Design, Development, and Network Marketing of Cultural and Creative Products of Dunhuang Museum

5.1 Focusing on Innovation and Integrating Its Cultural Characteristics into the Cultural and Creative Products

Dunhuang Museum shall integrate the unique cultural connotation of its collection into cultural and creative products, so that cultural and creative products become the carrier of cultural exchange between Dunhuang Museum and consumers, instead of blindly imitating the product forms [2]. Dunhuang Museum has a collection of distinctive cultural relics, including gray jade pillow, Diamond Sutra, Han Dynasty wooden tablets, Chu Ru Guan Ci bamboo slips, colored-drawing brick, stone pagoda, etc. However, it is a pity that Dunhuang Museum has not launched cultural and creative products corresponding to these highly representative cultural relics. In view of this, Dunhuang Museum shall combine these distinctive collection resources to carry out the diversified cultural and creative design. For example, the traffic card cover can be designed in the style of Chu Ru Guan Ci bamboo slips. The detachable stone pagoda model made of magnetic materials can be assembled by consumers themselves to increase their hands-on pleasure. Likewise, the packaging cartons of shop products can be made into brick blanks, accompanied by a picture of colored-drawing brick, to facilitate the portrayal of consumers. This not only spreads the cultural information of Dunhuang colored-drawing brick but also makes consumers experience a kind of immersive happiness.

5.2 Adhering to the Public Demand-oriented Development Strategy and Defining the Design Orientation of Cultural and Creative Products

According to the *Market Data Report of Museum Cultural and Creative Products in 2019*, the number of consumers who purchased museum cultural and creative products in 2019 was close to 9 million, more than four times that of 2017, with young urban women being the main consumers. Therefore, Dunhuang Museum shall pay special attention to the demands of this consumer group. For example, lipstick, eye shadow, and other products designed by the Palace Museum for young urban women not only have exquisite and luxurious appearances but also are full of the characteristics of the Palace Museum and classical Chinese style. Once launched, these products have been favored by consumers, and set off an upsurge in the beauty makeup industry.

The report also indicates that in 2019, there were as many as 100 million “post-90s” users browsing the flagship stores of the museum on Taobao and Tmall platforms [3]. Facing the younger consumers, the cultural and creative products of Dunhuang Museum shall also seek creative breakthroughs to design more interesting products to attract young people’s attention. For example, the “Cute-acting” Little Yellow Duck series products released by the British Museum in 2015 are full of fun. With its unique shape and the promotion slogan of “taking a bath with history”, it is very popular among young people.

5.3 Improving Product Quality and Focusing on Promotion and Interaction

Improving service quality and expanding service scope play a vital role in enhancing consumers’ goodwill. The “Palace Museum Taobao” has won a good market reputation for its cultural and creative products with its excellent service quality. Nonetheless, many consumers still report that they are incapable of contacting the customer service staff of Dunhuang Museum’s online store on Taobao so many problems cannot be solved. The online store on Taobao shall strive to provide timely service and maintain active customer relations.

Dunhuang Museum adopts a relatively single marketing method for cultural and creative products. In terms of publicity and interaction, the cultural and creative products of the Palace Museum have achieved great success. For example, Palace Museum Taobao actively interacts with fans on Weibo and often designs products according to their suggestions. It not only narrows the distance between brands and fans but also broadens the design ideas of products. In addition, Palace Museum Taobao regularly pushes articles on its WeChat official account and tells historical stories in a lively and cheerful language style, thus successfully enhancing the brand’s exposure to attract young people’s attention. Based on the foregoing successful experience, Dunhuang Museum can adopt diversified marketing methods to promote the brand’s cultural and creative products. Specifically, first, Dunhuang Museum can make full use of the multimedia

platform, cooperate with other popular variety shows, or participate in popular science variety shows similar to National Treasure to enhance its popularity. Secondly, it can choose the appropriate IPs to carry out cross-border cooperation. Nowadays, interest is the leading factor to attract people’s attention. The Chinese game Black Myth Wukong, which has been prevailing abroad recently, has made many foreigners know that Wukong is from the famous Chinese book *The Journey to the West*, instead of the Japanese anime *Dragon Ball*. Also, it makes many interested foreign friends spontaneously read *The Journey to the West* to learn about ancient Chinese culture and oriental gods and ghosts. In addition, through the big data analysis of user preferences, it is strongly recommended to implement accurate advertising placement and to pay for promotion on the front page of the matched APP. Meanwhile, Dunhuang Museum shall strengthen communication with the public. To this end, it can set up more solicitation activities for creativity and design small games similar to *Treasure-hunting on the Map*. These activities and games are beneficial to promoting the brand’s culture and the sales of the products by giving coupons to the winners. In a word, Dunhuang Museum shall proactively study and explore more diversified marketing and promotion methods, with a view to more effectively promoting the cultural and creative products of the brand and spreading the unique Dunhuang culture to more audiences.

6 Conclusions

To sum up, firmly conforming to the current new national-tide trend and adhering to the principle of “taking the essence and discarding the dregs”, Dunhuang Museum shall learn from excellent culture and use modern craft materials to cast the artisanship spirit of Chinese products, thus painstakingly forging every cultural and creative product. At this stage, cultural and creative products are no longer defined as simple tourist souvenirs. Instead, with its various types and wide coverage, it has been further endowed with many attributes, including culture, national tide, artistic aesthetics, etc., and is increasingly sought after by young people. More importantly, while consolidating the common bond between the art economy and historic culture, and effectively disseminating the museum’s historic culture, it has promoted economic growth to a greater extent. It is worth acknowledging that history will illuminate the future of humankind. In this connection, Dunhuang Museum shall devote more efforts to endowing cultural and creative products with more emotions and warmth.

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