

Research on Cultural and Creative Design Strategies of Henan Yinxu from the Perspective of New Media Communication

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Abstract: With the rapid development of new media technologies, the cultural and creative industries have entered a new stage of “communication-driven” development. Yinxu, an important archaeological site of Chinese civilization, has cultural and creative products that carry the core values of Yinshang culture. However, in the context of new media, there are still obvious shortcomings in their design and dissemination. This paper takes new media communication as the research perspective, combines theories such as communication studies and design studies, and through methods such as literature research, case analysis, and comparative study, deeply analyzes the existing problems in the design and communication of Yinxu cultural and creative products, and takes the new media practice of cultural and creative products of Lanzhou Museum in Gansu Province as a reference to construct a design strategy system of Yinxu cultural and creative products adapted to new media communication. The research aims to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of Yinxu cultural resources, provide theoretical references and practical paths for the new media dissemination of archaeological site-type cultural and creative products, and contribute to the contemporary dissemination of China’s fine traditional culture.

Keywords: New media communication; Yinxu Cultural and Creative; Design strategy; Lanzhou Museum; Cultural communication

Online publication: November 14, 2025

1. Research background

1.1. Policy push: Cultural and creative industries become a national strategic priority

In recent years, the state has attached great importance to the development of the cultural and creative industry. It has successively introduced policies such as the “14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development” and “Several Measures on Further Promoting the Development of Cultural and Creative Products in Cultural and Cultural Relics Units”, explicitly stating that it should “promote the combination of cultural heritage resources with modern design

and new media technology”, encourage cultural and cultural relics units to develop cultural and creative products with both cultural connotations and market competitiveness based on their own resources, and build the cultural and creative industry into one of the pillar industries of the national economy. In this context, archaeological site cultural resources, as an important carrier of China’s fine traditional culture, their cultural and creative development and dissemination have become a key path to achieve a win-win situation of cultural inheritance and economic development, providing policy support and direction for the development of Yinxu cultural and creative products.

1.2. Technological changes: New media reshaping the cultural and creative communication ecosystem

New media technologies, represented by short videos, live streaming, social platforms, and virtual technologies, have completely transformed the traditional “offline display, passive sale” communication model of cultural and creative products and constructed a full-chain communication ecosystem of “content production—precise communication—interactive experience—consumption conversion.” According to the “China New Media Development Report (2024)”, by the end of 2023, the number of short-video users in China reached 1.07 billion, accounting for 96.5% of the total number of Internet users. Platforms represented by Douyin, Kuaishou, and Xiaohongshu have become core channels for the dissemination and sale of cultural and creative products. New media not only provides a vast display space for cultural and creative products, but also achieves precise matching of cultural content with target audiences through methods such as algorithmic recommendations, scenario-based marketing, and user-generated content (UGC), providing technical possibilities for Yinxu cultural and creative products to break through communication limitations and expand cultural influence.

1.3. Market demand: Mass cultural consumption shows a trend of “personalization” and “depth”

With the increase in residents’ income levels and cultural literacy, the public’s demand for cultural products has shifted from “practical” to “experiential” and “emotional”, with a greater emphasis on the cultural connotations, design creativity, and interactive experience of cultural and creative products. Young people, as the main force of cultural consumption, are increasingly interested in traditional culture, but have a lower acceptance of the “homogeneous” and “heavy” design style of traditional cultural and creative products, and prefer “lightweight”, “fun”, and “social” cultural and creative products. Yinxu, the site of the discovery of oracle bone inscriptions and the ruins of the late Shang Dynasty capital, has unique cultural IPs (such as oracle bone inscriptions, bronze wares, sacrificial culture, etc.), but currently its cultural and creative products are still mainly traditional ornaments and stationery, failing to fully meet the personalized consumption demands of the masses in the new media era, and the market potential has not been fully unleashed.

1.4. Industry status: Cultural and creative products based on archaeological sites face a “communication dilemma”

At present, there is a common problem of “emphasizing development over dissemination” and “having culture but no traffic” in cultural and creative products of archaeological sites in China. Take Yinxu as an example. Its cultural and creative products are mostly sold through offline museum stores, and online dissemination only remains at the official website and a simple e-commerce platform display, lacking a grasp of the rules of new media dissemination, resulting in the cultural value being difficult to reach a wider audience. In contrast,

institutions such as the Lanzhou Museum in Gansu Province have taken the lead in exploring new media, cultural, and creative dissemination paths. By creating forms such as “cultural relic emoticons”, “short video story-driven dissemination”, and “online interactive games”, they have successfully turned cultural relic IPs like “Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow” into internet-famous products. Their experience provides an important reference for the development of the Yinxu cultural and creative products. It also highlights the urgency and necessity of studying the design strategies of Yinxu cultural and creative products from the perspective of new media communication.

2. Research significance

2.1. Theoretical implications

Enrich the theoretical system of cultural and creative design based on archaeological sites. Existing research has mostly explored the development of cultural and creative products from the perspectives of design aesthetics and cultural inheritance, with less systematic research in combination with the characteristics of new media communication. This paper combines the theory of new media communication with the theory of cultural and creative design to construct a “communication-design-experience” trinity research framework, providing a new theoretical perspective for the design of cultural and creative products based on archaeological sites.

Expand the application boundaries of new media communication theory in the cultural field. This paper takes Yinxu cultural and creative products as the specific research object, deeply analyzes the application path of new media technology in the dissemination of cultural heritage, summarizes the adaptation rules of cultural and creative products and new media communication, and provides empirical support for the practical application of new media communication theory in the field of cultural creativity.

2.2. Practical significance

Provide specific strategies for the design and dissemination of Yinxu cultural and creative products. By analyzing the existing problems of Yinxu cultural and creative products and combining the successful experience of Lanzhou Museum, this paper proposes design strategies adapted to new media communication to help Yinxu cultural and creative products break through communication bottlenecks, enhance market competitiveness, and achieve the unity of cultural value and economic value.

It provides references for other cultural and creative products related to archaeological sites. Yinxu, as a national archaeological site park, faces universal problems in its cultural and creative development. The findings of this paper can serve as a reference for the new media dissemination of cultural and creative products of other archaeological sites, such as Sanxingdui, Liangzhu, and the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor, and promote the creative transformation of cultural resources of archaeological sites in China.

Contribute to the contemporary dissemination of Shang culture. By optimizing the new media dissemination strategy of Yinxu cultural and creative products, ancient cultural symbols such as oracle bone inscriptions and bronze wares can be brought into people’s lives in a younger and more vivid way, enhancing people’s understanding and recognition of Yinshang culture and promoting the inheritance and development of China’s fine traditional culture.

3. Existing problems in the design and dissemination of Henan Yinxu Cultural and Creative Products

3.1. Product design: Superficial cultural connotations, lack of adaptability for new media dissemination

At present, Yinxu cultural and creative products are mainly “replicas of cultural relics”, and the design ideas are limited to directly printing cultural elements such as oracle bone inscriptions and bronze wares on carriers such as stationery, ornaments, and clothing, lacking in-depth exploration and creative transformation of cultural connotations. For example, some oracle bone script cultural products simply replicate the text patterns without explaining the meaning of the text and the cultural background, making it difficult to evoke emotional resonance and the willingness to spread among users. At the same time, the product design does not take into account the characteristics of new media dissemination and lacks “visual impact” and “social attributes” — there is neither a “high level of appearance” suitable for short video dissemination nor “interactive” design that can stimulate users’ UGC dissemination (such as DIY oracle bone puzzles, shareable cultural Q&A cards, etc.) The product is “lacking in topicality” on new media platforms and has difficulty generating buzz ^[1].

3.2. Distribution channels: Relying on traditional models, the new media layout is fragmented

The dissemination of Yinxu cultural and creative products is still “offline as the main and online as the secondary.” Offline, it relies on physical museum stores and cultural exhibitions. Online, only official stores are open on e-commerce platforms such as Taobao and JD.com, lacking a systematic layout of new media dissemination channels. Although the official accounts of Yinxu have entered platforms such as Douyin and WeChat official accounts, the content update frequency is low and the form is monotonous — Douyin accounts are mainly short videos of the “introduction of cultural relics” type, and the content is mostly explanations of museum exhibits, lacking integration with cultural and creative products; WeChat accounts are mainly academic and popular science, with long articles and obscure language, making it difficult to attract young users. In addition, there is a lack of synergy among various new media platforms. The short video content on Douyin does not guide users to jump to e-commerce platforms, and the popular science content on WeChat official accounts does not form topic linkage with short video platforms, resulting in scattered dissemination resources and the inability to form a closed loop of “content diversion - product conversion”, with low dissemination efficiency.

3.3. Dissemination content: Monotonous in form, lacking user interaction and participation

The communication content of Yinxu Cultural and creative products is mainly “one-way output”, lacking interaction and resonance with users. On the one hand, the content forms are limited to “product display” and “cultural science popularization”, without creating “personification of cultural relics” and “story-driven short videos” like the “cute” short videos of “Horse Trampling on a flying Swallow” like the Lanzhou Museum, nor developing participatory content forms such as online interactive games and live-streaming creation, which cannot stimulate users’ enthusiasm for participation; On the other hand, the dissemination of content neglects the “user perspective” and does not design topics based on the interests of young users (such as Hanfu, Chinese style, mystery reasoning, etc.). For example, a mystery short video could be designed around “oracle bone code”, but the relevant content is almost blank at present, resulting in a disconnection between the dissemination content and the needs of the target audience, making it difficult to generate viral spread.

3.4. Brand building: Weak IP awareness and lack of a unified new media image

Yinxu has core cultural IPs such as “Oracle Bone Script”, “Simuwu Ding”, and “Yinxu Royal Tombs”, but has not systematically developed and uniformly operated these IPs, resulting in a lack of “identifiability” in cultural and creative products. For instance, the design styles of different series of cultural and creative products vary greatly, with some taking the “traditional and heavy style” and some the “modern and simple style”, without forming a unified visual image; At the same time, the lack of a “super IP symbol” like the “Horse Trampling on a flying Swallow” of the Lanzhou Museum makes it difficult for users to form a deep brand memory. In addition, Yinxu Cultural and creative products failed to shape a clear brand positioning in new media communication — neither highlighting the differentiated advantage of “the combination of ancient civilization and modern creativity” nor creating a brand image of “trendy Chinese style” for young users, resulting in “lack of competitiveness” among numerous cultural and creative products and difficulty in attracting users’ attention and consumption.

3.5. Operating mode: Lack of a professional team and failure to achieve “communication-sales” synergy

The operation team of Yinxu Cultural and Creative Products is mainly composed of “cultural researchers”, lacking professional talents in new media operation, creative design, marketing, etc., resulting in insufficient operation capabilities. On the one hand, the team is not familiar with the rules of new media dissemination and cannot accurately grasp user demands and platform algorithms, making it difficult to create “blockbuster” content; On the other hand, there is a “disconnection between communication and sales” in the operation process — short video content only introduces culture and does not guide users to purchase cultural and creative products; The product detail pages of e-commerce platforms only introduce product parameters and do not combine cultural stories with communication content, resulting in “content-driven traffic” being unable to translate into “product sales.” In addition, the team has not established a user feedback mechanism and is unable to adjust product design and communication strategies based on user needs, resulting in a disconnection between cultural and creative products and market demand, making it difficult to form a sustainable operation model.

4. Case analysis of cultural and creative media communication at Lanzhou Museum, Gansu Province (Reference case)

4.1. Case overview

The Lanzhou Museum in Gansu Province, with “Horse Treading on a Flying Swallow” (Bronze galloping Horse) as its core IP, has achieved the “cross-border” dissemination of its cultural and creative products through new media. In 2021, the Lanzhou Museum launched the “Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow” cultural and creative series, but the initial sales were mediocre; In 2022, through platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu, it created the “Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow” “cute” image and released “personification of cultural relics” short videos (such as “The Daily Life of a Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow”), which quickly attracted the attention of netizens. The related topic # How Cute is a Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow # had more than 1 billion views. Subsequently, the Lanzhou Museum launched cultural and creative products such as the “Horse Trampling Swallow” dolls, keychains, and emoticons. Online sales soared, with monthly sales on Douyin alone exceeding 5 million yuan, becoming a typical case of new media dissemination of archaeological site culture.

4.2. Core experience of cultural innovation media dissemination at Lanzhou Museum

“Cuteness” of the IP image, adapted to the characteristics of new media communication: Lanzhou Museum breaks the traditional perception of “heavy and serious cultural relics” and designs “horse trampling a flying swallow” as a cute image of “tilted head killing” and “sticking out tongue”, which retains the core features of the cultural relics (such as the shape of a galloping horse and the base of a flying bird) while endowing it with a cute and playful personality that meets the aesthetic needs of young users. This “cuteness” design has a strong visual impact and is suitable for dissemination on short video platforms, easily triggering likes, comments, and shares from users.

The content form is “plot-driven” to enhance user resonance: The Lanzhou Museum has created plot-driven short videos such as “A Day of Cultural Relics” and “The Interaction between the Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow and Other Cultural Relics” around the cute image of “the Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow”, telling the cultural stories behind the cultural relics in a humorous and light-hearted way. For example, in a short video, “Horse Trampling on a Flying bird” knocked over another artifact by “running too fast”, it not only showcased the shape of the artifact but also attracted users with an interesting plot. The video was viewed over 50 million times, successfully transforming “cultural science popularization” into “interesting content” and enhancing users’ emotional resonance.

“Synergistic” dissemination channels to form a communication loop: Lanzhou Museum has built a synergistic dissemination channel of “short video platform for traffic diversion — social platform for interaction — e-commerce platform for conversion.” Post cute short videos on Douyin and Kuaishou to guide users to follow the WeChat official account for cultural knowledge; Invite Kols (Opinion Leaders) on Xiaohongshu to post reviews of cultural and creative products to stimulate users’ desire to purchase; At the same time, add links to e-commerce platforms in short videos to achieve a seamless “view-buy” connection and form a closed loop of dissemination and sales.

User engagement “deepens” to stimulate UGC dissemination: Lanzhou Museum launches “Horse Trampling on a Flying Swallow Emoji”, “DIY Hand-drawing activity”, etc., to encourage users to participate in content creation. For example, users can download emoticons to use on social media platforms, or hand-draw creative images of “horses treading on flying swallows” and share them on Douyin, and the official account forwards quality content, which has sparked a large number of users’ enthusiasm for participation. According to statistics, the topic # My Drawing of a Horse Treading on a flying Swallow # has been played over 200 million times, and user-generated content has become an important force for dissemination, achieving a viral effect of “brand dissemination — user participation — secondary dissemination.”

5. The main content of this paper

5.1. Research on the theoretical basis of new media communication and creative design

Sort out the core features of new media communication (such as interactivity, fragmentation, personalization, UGC communication, etc.), and analyze the influence mechanism of new media technology on the design, dissemination, and consumption of cultural and creative products^[2].

Summarize the core theories of cultural and creative design (such as cultural semiotics, experience design theory, IP operation theory, etc.), explore the convergence points of new media communication and cultural and creative design, and construct the theoretical framework of “communication-design-experience”^[3].

5.2. Research on the current situation of cultural and creative design and communication in Yinxu, Henan Province

Collect information on the design types, price ranges, and sales data of Yinxu cultural and creative products through on-site research (Yinxu Museum, cultural and creative physical stores) and online research (e-commerce platforms, new media accounts).

Analyze the current dissemination status of Yinxu cultural and creative products on new media platforms, including the content form, update frequency, number of followers, interaction data (likes, comments, shares) of each platform account, and summarize its dissemination characteristics and shortcomings^[4].

Through questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews, understand the awareness, purchase intention, and demand preferences (such as product types, design styles, communication forms, etc.) of young users towards the cultural and creative products of Yinxu, providing data support for the subsequent strategy formulation.

5.3. In-depth analysis of media communication cases of cultural innovation in Lanzhou Museum, Gansu Province

Systematically analyze the IP creation, product design, communication channels, content forms, operation models, etc. of the cultural and creative products of the Lanzhou Museum, and summarize its successful experiences.

Compare the differences between Yinxu and Lanzhou Museum's cultural and creative products, with a focus on analyzing the gaps between the two in terms of adaptation to new media communication, user interactivity, brand building, etc., and extract the core strategies that can be learned from.

5.4. Construction of cultural and creative design strategies for Henan Yinxu from the perspective of new media communication

IP image and product design strategies: Based on the core elements of Yinxu culture (oracle bone inscriptions, bronze wares, sacrificial culture, etc.) and in combination with the characteristics of new media communication, propose product design strategies such as "IP symbolization", "design lightweight", and "interactive experience", such as creating an exclusive "cute IP image" for Yinxu, developing DIY oracle bone inscriptions cultural and creative products, designing "high appearance level" products suitable for short video communication, etc.^[5].

New media communication channel strategy: Build a multi-channel communication system of "short video platform + social platform + e-commerce platform + virtual platform", clarify the positioning and content division of each platform (such as Douyin focusing on fun short videos, Xiaohongshu focusing on product reviews, WeChat official account focusing on in-depth popular science), achieve channel synergy and interaction, and form a communication closed loop^[6-7].

Innovation strategy for communication content: Based on the interests of young users, design content forms such as "story-driven short videos", "personification of cultural relics", "online interactive games", "live creation", etc., to combine cultural science popularization with fun content and enhance user participation and communication willingness^[8].

Brand operation and user interaction strategy: Build a unified Yinxu cultural and creative brand image and define the brand positioning of "ancient civilization + modern creativity"; Establish a user feedback mechanism to attract users to participate in product design and dissemination through online voting, creative solicitation, etc., to stimulate UGC dissemination and enhance brand influence^[9].

5.5. Implementation paths and safeguard measures for Yinxu cultural and creative design strategies

Propose specific steps for the implementation of the strategy (such as IP image design, content creation, channel building, user operation, etc.), and clarify the goals and tasks for each stage^[10].

Propose safeguard measures for strategy implementation from aspects such as talent development, financial support, technical guarantee, and cooperation mechanism to ensure that the design strategy can be implemented^[4].

6. Conclusions and prospects

6.1. Research conclusions

This study, from the perspective of new media communication, investigated the current situation of design and communication of Yinxu cultural and creative products in Henan Province, combined with the successful case of Lanzhou Museum in Gansu Province, and constructed a design strategy system of Yinxu cultural and creative products adapted to new media communication. The study suggests that Yinxu cultural and creative products need to exert efforts in four dimensions: “product design, communication channels, content innovation, and brand operation”, to achieve a deep integration of cultural connotations and the characteristics of new media communication by creating “symbolic IP images”, building “multi-channel communication closed loops”, designing “interactive communication content”, and establishing “user-participatory operation models”, and break through the current development bottlenecks.

6.2. Research outlook

In the future, with the development of new technologies such as the metaverse and artificial intelligence, the dissemination and experience of cultural and creative products will undergo new changes. Further research could explore the application of new technologies such as “virtual digital cultural and creative products” and “AR/VR cultural experience” in Yinxu cultural and creative products, such as developing “Oracle Bone Script Metaverse exhibition halls”, allowing users to interact with Yinxu cultural and creative products through virtual avatars; Or use AI technology to customize personalized cultural and creative products for users, further enhancing the user experience and communication effect. At the same time, the research scope can be expanded to compare Yinxu cultural and creative products with those of other archaeological sites, summarize more universal new media communication strategies, and provide broader ideas for the contemporary dissemination of China’s fine traditional culture.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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