

Research and Application of Emotional Design in University Cultural and Creative Products

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Abstract: Cultural and creative products of universities are an external reflection of the university's image. They are not only materialized artworks and carriers of beauty, but also a means of expressing emotions and cultural dissemination. Currently, the cultural and creative products of universities have problems such as severe design homogeneity, insufficient content, and weak audience stickiness. To address these issues, the essential characteristics of such products should be analyzed from the perspective of emotional design and the cultural value they embody. By combining the common student life backgrounds in daily life, such as learning, communication, commemoration, and gift-giving, the possibility of enhancing product quality and user experience through emotional design methods should be considered. Research shows that emotional design can effectively enhance students' perception and identification with campus culture, help improve the dissemination strength and sustainability of innovative products of universities among students, and provide a reference basis for the design of cultural and creative products of universities.

Keywords: University cultural and creative products; Emotional design; Campus culture dissemination; User experience

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1. Introduction

Under the circumstances of continuous upgrading of cultural consumption and the continuous advancement of university brand building, universities have gradually begun to attach importance to cultural dissemination through specific products as carriers, no longer confined to simply displaying some cultural materials. After cultural and creative products enter campus life, students not only pay attention to issues such as practicality and convenience, but also hope to gain a sense of identity and belonging, and even a sense of nostalgia. This people-oriented emotional design integrates cultural elements, aesthetic pleasure, and spiritual sustenance into the production process, providing new ideas for improving the development of university cultural and creative products and enhancing their campus influence ^[1].

2. Creative products and the theoretical foundation of emotional design

2.1. Definition and characteristics of university creative products

University cultural and creative products refer to those products that are transformed through creativity based on university culture and are applied in real life, possessing practical value, aesthetic value, and dissemination value. Their content originates from the historical heritage of the university, the campus atmosphere, the advantages of the disciplines, the spirit of the masters, and the daily life experiences of students. They have both material attributes and spiritual connotations, and simultaneously present the university's brand image. Compared to ordinary tourist goods or commercial derivatives, the individual characteristics and emotional value of university cultural and creative products are more prominent. The service targets are relatively limited, mainly targeting students, alumni, and social visitors. University cultural and creative products often exhibit the characteristics of combining cultural nature, commemoration, practicality, and identification. Among them, cultural nature is reflected in the concise summary of the college spirit and history, commemoration is the preservation of learning life and personal memories, practicality enables them to be applied in real-life scenarios, and the enhancement of identification helps the university culture logo to be better recognized and promoted [2].

2.2. Core value of emotional design

Emotional design emphasizes the spiritual connection between the product and the user. While meeting functional requirements, it should also reflect aesthetic pleasure, emotional experience, and psychological identification. When applied to the construction of the product environment in university campuses, it can integrate the originally abstract university culture with physical products, transforming the product from a simple item into an emotional carrier. During the process of students' acceptance, use, and preservation, it will generate a strong sense of belonging for the school's brand, cultural memory, and group identity [3]. For enhancing the value of university creative products, it depends on the emotional added value of the creative products. The core value of emotional design can be summarized in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Core values of emotional design in university cultural and creative products

Value Dimension	Main Connotation	Manifestation in University Cultural and Creative Products
Aesthetic Attraction	Form direct favorability through shape, color, and material	Enhance the first impression of the product and purchase intention
User Experience	Emphasize functional adaptation and comfort in the process of use	Strengthen the practicality of the product and the sense of daily companionship
Cultural Identity	Integrate campus spirit and cultural symbols into design expression	Strengthen the sense of belonging of teachers, students, and alumni to the university
Memory Carrying	Activate campus experiences and personal growth memories	Enhance the commemorative significance and preservation value of the product

2.3. Cultural communication function of university creative products

University cultural and creative products are not merely campus souvenirs; they are, more importantly, carriers of culture. After transforming culture into commodities, the culture that was originally attached to books, buildings, and rituals becomes concrete and directly presented to consumers. During this process, along with the sales, use, display, and sharing of the products, cultural information is transmitted, emotional identification is established, and the school's reputation is also enhanced. For universities, creative products not only carry a culture and an idea,

but also serve as an important medium for connecting internal groups and expressing viewpoints externally ^[4]. Their communication function can be summarized as shown in **Figure 1**.

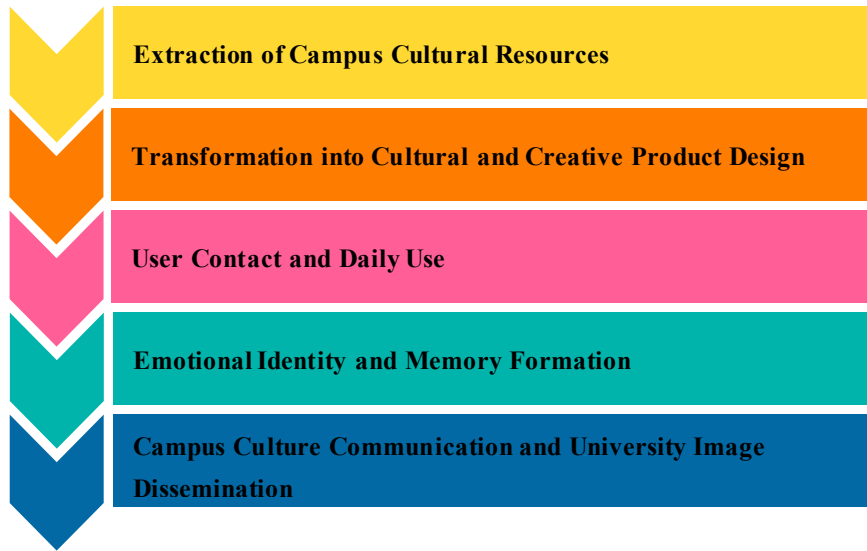


Figure 1. Diagram of the cultural communication function of university creative products

3. Implementation paths of emotional design for university creative products

3.1. Core logical framework of creative products

The emotional design of cultural products in universities does not merely attach cultural elements to the surface of the goods; instead, it forms a clear design logic centered around “cultural content—emotional needs—product expression—usage feedback.” The historical traditions, architectural landscapes, disciplinary characteristics, and campus symbols of universities serve as the content foundation for the cultural products; on this basis, the design must also respond to the real needs of users in terms of a sense of belonging, identity, commemoration, and participation. Only when cultural resources are filtered, translated, and restructured and combined with the specific product functions, aesthetic forms, and usage scenarios, can the cultural products shift from being ordinary souvenirs to cultural carriers with emotional warmth. That is to say, the design of university cultural products is not just a matter of form design; it is an integration process of cultural significance and emotional experience ^[5].

From the perspective of the operational mechanism, this logical framework consists of several interconnected links: cultural refinement, emotional identification, design transformation, and feedback dissemination. Cultural refinement addresses the issue of “what to design”, emotional identification responds to the question of “for whom to design”, design transformation handles the issue of “how to present”, and feedback dissemination reflects the question of “whether it can enter daily life and continue to spread.” Once the product is removed from the real usage scenario, cultural expression is prone to remaining superficial; once the product lacks emotional orientation, cultural symbols are difficult to form lasting memories ^[6]. To more clearly present the composition relationship of the emotional design of university cultural products, it can be summarized as follows:

$$D = aC + bE + cS \tag{1}$$

Among them, D represents the emotional design effect of university cultural products, C represents the degree of transformation of campus culture content, E represents the degree of matching of user emotional needs, S represents the degree of product scene adaptation, and a, b, and c represent the weights of each element in the

overall design. This formula indicates that the emotional level of university cultural products is not determined by a single factor, but is the result of the joint action of cultural expression, emotional response, and scene embedding.

Based on the above relationship, the core logical framework of university cultural products can be further expressed as a continuous path from resources to dissemination, as shown in **Figure 2**. The various links in the figure are not isolated but are interrelated and cyclically corrected. Designers can continuously optimize the cultural expression method and product form based on user feedback ^[7].

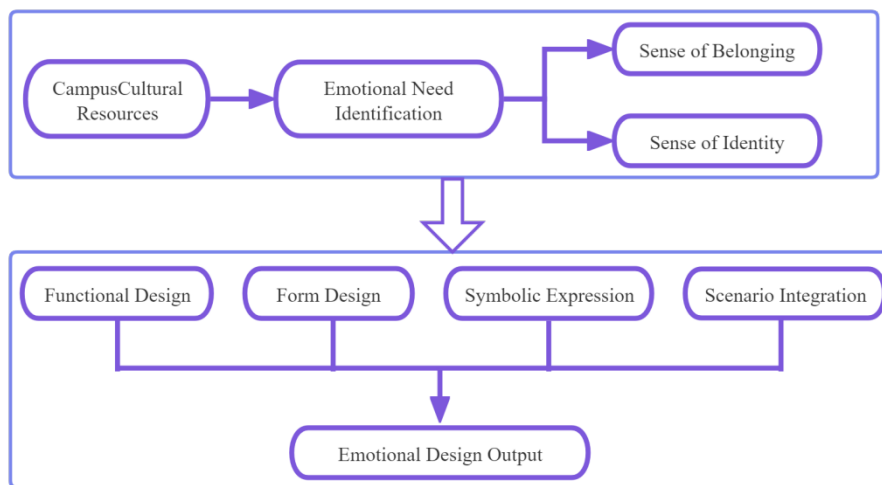


Figure 2. Core logical framework of emotional design for university creative products

3.2. Emotional design application in core life scenarios

For university cultural and creative products to truly function, they cannot merely remain as static representations of cultural symbols; they must also enter specific living scenarios and establish stable usage connections. Campus life has distinct daily and phased characteristics. Students have different expectations for the products in various situations, such as studying, socializing, commemorating, and giving as gifts. Some value the sense of companionship and practicality more, some focus more on identity expression and interactive experience, and some attach more importance to commemorative significance and emotional attachment. After emotional design enters these scenarios, the products are no longer merely carriers of cultural information but become media connecting campus memories, personal experiences, and real-life usage. Only when the design aligns with the scenarios can the cultural content in the products be naturally perceived and the emotional value be more easily accepted and accumulated ^[8].

From the perspective of design implementation, different scenarios correspond to different emotional touchpoints and expression priorities. The learning scenario is more suitable for highlighting the sense of companionship, order, and campus belonging, the social scenario emphasizes individual expression and group identity, the commemoration scenario focuses on evoking growth memories and a sense of ceremony, and the gift-giving scenario requires balancing cultural dissemination and emotional transmission. Designers need to make targeted handling in terms of function, form, symbols, and packaging based on the characteristics of the scenarios, so that the products can naturally complete emotional expression during use. Based on this idea, **Table 2** summarizes the application of emotional design for university cultural and creative products in core living scenarios.

Table 2. Application of emotional design in core life scenarios

Core Scenario	Main Emotional Needs	Design Focus	Typical Product Forms
Learning Scenario	Sense of belonging, sense of companionship	Strengthen the combination of practical functions and campus cultural elements	Notebooks, bookmarks, stationery sets
Social Scenario	Sense of identity, sense of expression	Highlight personalization, interactivity, and visual recognition	Badges, canvas bags, mobile phone accessories
Commemorative Scenario	Sense of ritual, sense of nostalgia	Emphasize storytelling, collectability, and emotional retention	Graduation souvenirs, anniversary commemorative badges
Gift-giving Scenario	Sense of sharing, sense of dissemination	Pay attention to cultural implication, packaging expression, and sense of quality	Cultural and creative gift boxes, characteristic souvenirs

3.3. Stratified design strategy for target groups

The audience for university cultural products exhibits significant hierarchical differences. Different groups have varying roles, emotional foundations, and expectations regarding the use of these products within the campus. Freshmen are still in the process of establishing their understanding of campus culture and are more likely to focus on whether the products have guiding and intimate qualities; students in school have the closest connection to campus life and place greater emphasis on the practical applicability and personalized expression space of the products; graduates often have a retrospective sentiment when accepting campus culture, with their emotional demands concentrated on commemoration, preservation, and reflection on growth; alumni groups have a more continuous identification and spiritual connection with the school. Designing for these differences should not remain at the level of uniform development; instead, it should adjust the cultural expression methods, visual language, and emotional touchpoints according to the characteristics of each group, so that the products can form a clearer sense of objectivity^[9].

The key to hierarchical design lies not in simply dividing the audience, but in establishing a design path that matches the experiences of the groups. For products targeting freshmen, the focus should be on campus identification, cultural introduction, and emotional placement, allowing the products to play a role of companionship and cognition in the early stage of entering university life; for products targeting students in school, the emphasis should be on practical value and interactive attributes, enabling them to integrate into daily activities such as learning, socializing, and display; for products targeting graduates, the emphasis should be on creating a sense of ceremony, through symbol refinement and memory narration, to enhance emotional retention; for products targeting alumni, the focus should be on quality expression and cultural depth, so that they can carry identity recognition and long-term collection value. Such hierarchical strategies help enhance the targeted nature of university cultural products and also promote the formation of a continuous and stable emotional connection between campus culture and different groups.

4. Effects and applications of emotional design for university creative products

4.1. Enhancement of user experience by emotional design

Emotional design can enhance the user experience of university cultural and creative products. When users first come into contact with such products, they will form their first impression based on the shape, color, and material.

During the experience, they will further pay attention to whether the functions are convenient and whether the emotional expression is close to their own experiences. For university cultural and creative products, a good experience not only includes the satisfaction of practical needs, but also covers the cultural level and the deep spiritual connection of individualization. When the product can bring a strong emotional resonance, consumers are more likely to develop a sense of identification and like, and are willing to continue owning it, changing from a one-time consumption to a continuous experience process^[10]. **Table 3** summarizes the main manifestations of how emotional design enhances user experience.

Table 3. Improvement of the user experience of university cultural and creative products by emotional design

Experience Dimension	Specific Manifestation	Improvement Effect
Sensory Experience	Shape, color, and material are more attractive	Enhance the affinity of the product and the first impression
Use Experience	Functions are reasonable and the use process is smoother	Improve practicality and daily use frequency
Emotional Experience	Can evoke campus memories and identity recognition	Enhance user preference and emotional attachment
Communication Experience	More willing to display, share, and recommend	Expand product influence and cultural communication effect

4.2. Promotion of cultural communication by emotional design

When university cultural products enter the stages of use, display, and sharing, the way of cultural dissemination of the university will also change accordingly. Integrating emotional design into it can shorten the cognitive distance of the audience group towards university culture and transform the abstract cultural spirit into a perceptible and concrete experience. Users form likes, identifications, and memories during the use of the products, which makes it easier for them to transform it into active display and social sharing behaviors. Campus culture also shifts from static output to dynamic diffusion, and the dissemination range gradually extends from within the campus to outside. To illustrate the relationship between emotional design and cultural dissemination, it can be expressed as:

$$C = \alpha E + \beta I + \gamma S \quad (1)$$

Among them, C represents the cultural dissemination effect, E represents the user experience, I represents the cultural identification, S represents the willingness to share and disseminate, and α , β , and γ represent the influence weights of each factor. The promotion mechanism of emotional design on cultural dissemination can be summarized in **Figure 3**.

Emotional design's promotion of cultural dissemination does not merely stop at the optimization of product appearance; instead, it gradually achieves it through experience accumulation, identification generation, and sharing diffusion. Its internal action path has the characteristics of continuity and progressive layers, and the specific mechanism is shown in **Figure 3**.

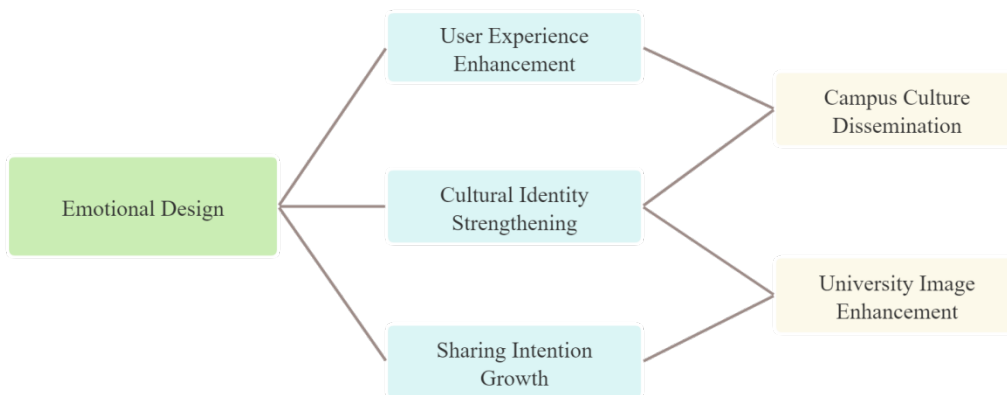


Figure 3. Mechanism of emotional design in promoting campus culture communication

4.3. Promotion strategies and practical suggestions for emotional design

The development of university cultural and creative products cannot be separated from emotional expression. This requires consideration from the perspective of combining cultural nature and functionality, as well as how to effectively convey information. Before designing, it is necessary to understand the historical accumulation of the university, the spiritual connotation of the campus, and the symbolic symbols, to avoid falling into the superficial level of simple symbol superimposition, so that the works have clear and profound cultural connotations and characteristic recognizability. In the design, practical scenarios should be considered, and the functionalities and appearances of the products should be taken into account in terms of learning, living, and gift-giving needs, so that they can integrate into students' daily lives. During the execution process, online exhibition halls, campus activities, and commemorative events at key time points should be utilized to enhance consumers' experience and perception, thereby promoting the transition of products from one-way sales to continuous promotion. Universities can establish a creative design feedback mechanism, absorbing the opinions of teachers, students, and alumni, and based on this, continuously enrich the product connotation and presentation methods, thereby enhancing its cultural affinity and practical conversion effect.

5. Conclusion

The development of university cultural and creative products is no longer limited to commemoration and sales, but gradually develops into a practical operation process integrating cultural dissemination, emotional communication, and brand image promotion. Applying the emotional design concept in the design of university cultural and creative products can enhance the affinity and applicability of the products, strengthen the sense of cultural identification, and thereby better convey campus culture and values to the public. Through cultural exploration, environmental application, and hierarchical design concepts for product development, it helps strengthen the emotional connection between the university's cultural products and teachers, students, and alumni. In the future, university cultural and creative product design should pay more attention to the exploration of cultural depth, the improvement of design quality, and the refinement of promotion methods, promoting the realization of a warmer and more dynamic campus culture dissemination.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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