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Influence of Internet Celebrities on China's Cultural Product Design

You Xue Min[1], Rafeah Legino[2]

[1] SCCM Chengdu Academy of Fine Arts, Sichuan province, China,
[2] Universiti Teknologi MARA 40450 Shah Alam Selangor Malaysia

2021422372@student.uitm.edu.my, rafeahl@uitm.edu.my
Tel:+8615902835506

Abstract

This paper intends to research how and why internet celebrities influenced the design of cultural products in China. This study analyzes the typical internet celebrity who has produced so many classical cultural products, and the result shows the factors of internet celebrity's influence and their influencing process on cultural product design. Furthermore, this paper will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the influence of internet celebrities. This paper examines the typical cultural product design cases of Chinese internet celebrities and their influences on China's cultural industry. Qualitative research and Literature analysis are the main methods used in this study.

Keywords: Internet celebrities, China, influence, Cultural product design

1.0 Introduction

In China, "cultural industries" is the official term used by the government. At the policy level, it remains the edict for framing cultural development. In many cities and regions, The term 'creative industries' is used more often in many cities and regions instead (Yang Jianfei,2011). The history of cultural industries can be traced back to the industrial revolution of the 19th century to the 1930s when cultural industries were starting to mature. The concept of cultural industries was first used in the early 1940s by Theodor W. Adorno. The concept of creative industries was first documented in 1994 in Australia when the government released their new cultural policy, "Creative nation", The plan aims to give Australia a competitive edge in the rapidly growing IT industry. After that, The UK started to articulate the cultural and creative industries concept with New Labor coming into power in 1998. In Asia, Cultural products are produced for various reasons, but the main reason for making cultural products appears to be economic (Herald, 1993). In many developing countries, agriculture is the main source of income, and producing cultural products is a secondary income source (Pye, 1986; Basu, 1995). Pye (1986) said that producing crafts is "a rice bowl" issue for the population in rural area in developing countries; people earn subsistence income from making crafts. China's cultural and creative industry has developed along with the reform of the cultural system. At first, the establishment of a modern cultural market was put forward, and then the construction of a modern public cultural service system was put forward. Since the 1980s, the government, academia, and cultural institutions have made all-around attempts and promoted this. Since the middle and late 1990s, the cultural industry has entered the vision of all sides. With the deepening of the transformation of for-profit cultural institutions into enterprises, the rise of emerging cultural enterprises, the liberalization of government policies at all levels, and the theoretical discussion of academic circles, the cultural industry has gradually become a national strategy. In 2004, the National Bureau of Statistics

issued the Classification of Culture and Its Related Industries. In 2009, The State Council issued the Cultural Industry Revitalization Plan. In 2010, the fifth Plenary Session of the 17th CPC Central Committee proposed to promote the cultural industry as a pillar industry of the national economy. At this point, the cultural and creative industry has established a pillar position in China's economic pattern (IMECIRI, 2018. The report of the 18th Representative Commission of the Chinese Communist Party clearly puts forward "to carry out the strategy of innovation-driven development" in 2012. This shows that innovative product design has risen to the position from enterprise behavior to the national economic and social development strategy. With this background, innovative products (especially the products embodying the character of the regional culture) seem more important. Innovative products designed with evident national and regional cultural features have become the common focus of designers and theoretical researchers (Yang Ling,2016).

China's nationality-specific style in product design is influenced by Chinese essential cultures and lifestyles. With the variety of China's internet celebrity styles that have emerged in recent years, including those with unique styles and innovations, in the fields of graphic design, interior design, industrial design, and architecture. However, internet celebrities are also influencing the design field of cultural products. Moreover, Weibo (a twitter-like service in China), TikTok, and KuaiShou are the most important social media platforms in China. Weibo has 573 million monthly active users and 249 million daily active users (Weibo, 2021), 98% of whom are in mainland Chinese (Weibo, 2021). Fourth quarter business revenues were 550 million USD. Therefore, the influence of internet celebrities is enormous in China. For example, in 2010, the Beijing Palace Museum became a super Internet celebrity, with 5.42 million fans on Weibo and a 1-billion-dollar sales volume on the Taobao online sale platform for their cultural and creative products (Jida Li, 2018). besides, the 26.98 million fans celebrity Li ZiQi also impacts cultural dissemination and the style of cultural product design in China greatly. She is one of the world-famous internet celebrities who launched her first short video on Weibo in 2015. The brand LI ZIQI got a 3-billion-yuan sales volume on the Weibo and Taobao online sale platform for their cultural products in 2021. Because of their success, there are more and more companies and online brands that changed their design style and developed the strategies of their products by learning from that super internet celebrity, most of the design styles emerged with Chinese cultural features. Nevertheless, some got succeed and some got failed. Hence, this research is being conducted into how internet celebrities influence cultural product design in China via social platforms, their improvement, and whether settling new innovative design methods and opening new opportunities for designers and scholars in China's cultural and creative industry will be discussed.

2.0 Methodology

This research is conducted using literature analysis and a case study to examine selected internet celebrity's cultural products. Literature analysis provides a detailed description of the literature's content and arranges it chronologically for easy comprehension. A case study is a method of examining a specific subject to determine the factors responsible for the state or behaviors of individuals, groups, and institutions, and these factors may influence one another.Whereby the data was gathered via text and visual data analysis. The study is enhanced with the appreciation of cultural products through the chosen internet celebrities, especially one that uses Chinese traditional cultural elements as inspirations in the cultural product design. Most of the images will be recorded from photos that use Chinese cultural elements as an inspiration in cultural product design. The internet celebrity's cultural products selected were categorized to determine how the cultural product design was influenced by internet celebrities and the main factors of their influence. The analysis contributed to helping the researcher to examine the factors of internet celebrity's influence on cultural product design. The researcher will be able to analyze data, and this methodology will help the researcher to give insights to her research positively. Indeed, the method used will help the researcher to examine the influence of internet celebrities on cultural products, exposing the cultural product design field more towards the designers to explore product design and research. Besides, this study will prove to the audience how cultural product design can be influenced by the current internet culture, even if the influencer is not a real human Bing.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The selected internet celebrity for this paper is the Beijing Palace Museum. In 2010, the Beijing Palace Museum became a super Internet celebrity, with 5.42 million fans on Weibo and a 1-billion-dollar sales volume on the Taobao online sale platform for their cultural and creative products (Jida Li, 2018). Beijing's Palace Museum was founded on October 10, 1925, and is in the Imperial Palace, the Forbidden City. Located in Beijing, the Palace Museum houses collections from the imperial palaces of the Ming and Qing dynasties. China's largest museum of ancient culture and art. It has attracted much attention because of its place in culture and history. No need to doubt that it is one of the most famous cultural icons of China. Over 10,000 cultural and creative items are in the Palace Museum in Beijing. In 2017, Shan Jixiang, the curator of Beijing's Palace Museum, published the "accounting book" of cultural and creative works. Cultural and creative works generated 1.5 billion yuan in sales in 2017, more than 15 A-share companies. Beijing's Palace Museum has gone through three stages in its development from a cultural and creative perspective:

First, cultural relics are developed spontaneously.

The second stage is self-conscious cultural relics research and development.

Thirdly, cultural themes are created.

Beijing imperial palace, from 2018 to 2019, started with size, quantity, quality, efficiency, studying cultural and historical and cultural relics museums, as well as studying for thousands of years Chinese culture, lifestyle, and research and development on new generation products and wisdom. With its attractiveness, credibility, and expertise in Chinese culture, The Palace Museum is a symbol of Chinese culture that spreads Chinese culture throughout the world. In Figure 1, we can see a series of innovative cultural and creative products

have been produced by the Palace Museum in recent years. Furthermore, in 2013, Shan Jixiang, the curator of the Palace Museum, proposed that "cultural products should not only be cultural but also creative." Since then, the Palace Museum has begun to show strong cultural and creative development value and has also driven the development of the whole Chinese cultural and creative design field. And it has become a super Internet celebrity with 5.42 million fans and an annual sales volume of 1 billion since the official sales online store of Taobao was launched in 2010. Beijing Palace Museum has changed its serious attitude toward the former products and began to become "unorthodox". The Palace Museum not only attracts numerous fans through various kinds of cute interaction but also drives the collective cute selling trend of museums and other cultural and museum institutions across the country (Xian Yi,2017). Then, the Phenomenon of Internet Celebrity Design came out. In addition to inheriting the characteristic of an Internet celebrity to attract attention, it also introduces new thinking and changes to the design industry due to its unique design features and forms (Jida Li 2021). For this reason, they influenced the design aesthetics and the future of cultural product design by the Chinese traditionality moderates the indirect influence of perceived value on purchase intention through design aesthetics (Yang Li1& Jie Li. 2019).
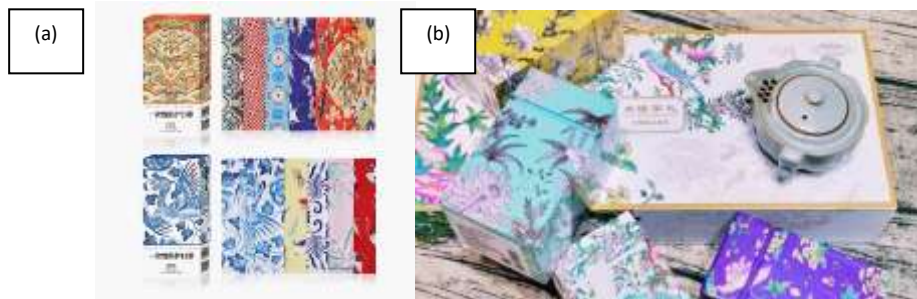

Fig.1: Cultural products from The Palace Museum.
(Source:) (a)"mask" from Beijing Palace Museum TaoBao online store.(b) "tea pot" photo taken by the author.

Schouten et al. (2019) explain that most companies do not use traditional celebrity endorsements to promote their brands. However, these companies have adopted internet influencers such as bloggers, social media influencers, and famous personalities on different social media platforms. Social media influencers have a significant influence on the effectiveness of advertising for many companies. Social media has numerous users across the globe, and the use of these influencers allows companies to reach many consumers through the internet (Chapple & Cownies, 2017). Therefore, internet celebrity's influence enables marketers to promote their brands and the unique products they have created. Take the co-branded cultural products by The Palace Museum as an example in Figure 2. According to it, the positive image and characteristics of the internet celebrity blend with the positive image and characteristics of products and brands will lead to a positive perspective of consumers towards the products and brand, and internet celebrities influenced the product's style and features by the internet celebrity design. Based on this research, the results show that internet celebrity endorsements effectively improve designing and subsequent product promotion for companies.

Fig.2: co-branded cultural products from The Palace Museum
(Source:) (a)"co-branded with ANTA" from ANTA online store. (b) "co-branded with Lenovo" from digitaling.com

According to the statistical report on China's Internet Development released by the China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC), as of March 28, 2020, the number of Internet users in China is 904 million, and the Internet penetration rate is 64.5%. According to the age structure of Internet users in China (see figure 3), Internet users aged 10-39 accounted for 62.6%, respectively, which was significantly higher than other age groups (Jida Li,2021).

This indicates that Internet users are primarily young people who are better able to face technological challenges and are good at using the Internet to obtain information and quickly adapt to a new environment. In the context of the multiple communication of social activities and social media, design works that meet the aesthetic standards of this group and meet their functional needs may become quickly popular among the public so that they might attract more attention and gain greater recognition with the identity of Internet celebrity design. With its creation, the influence of internet celebrities has swept every design field, especially on the cultural product design field at a hurricane-like pace and becoming a highly suspected phenomenon. It has created clear divisions between design audiences. According

to the positive side of the coin, the influence of internet celebrities reflects the needs of the new era and represents the new direction of fashion. However, the rise of Internet celebrities' influence sometimes is viewed as a sign of vulgar, alternative, and evil taste by the negative side. As a matter of fact, one-sided positives and one-sided negatives do not capture the current reality completely. In addition, excessive optimism ignores the tendency of Internet celebrities' influence on cultural product design to pursue the internet celebrity effect because of excessive marketization and even at the expense of the value of design. Pessimistically speaking, we only perceive kitsch culture in the narrow sense of internet celebrities, neglecting to realize the positives of internet celebrities' influence on cultural product design. According to "China Internet Celebrity Economy Market Outlook and Investment Research Report 2020" published by China Business Industry Research Institute, the market scale of ICE in China is expected to exceed 500 billion yuan by 2022 (2020 China Netflix Economy Market Outlook & Investment Research Report, 2020). Nowadays, ICE has become a mainstream trend and significantly changes people's lives and social and consumption patterns. It has also brought contributed to the development of the design industry (Jida Li,2021).
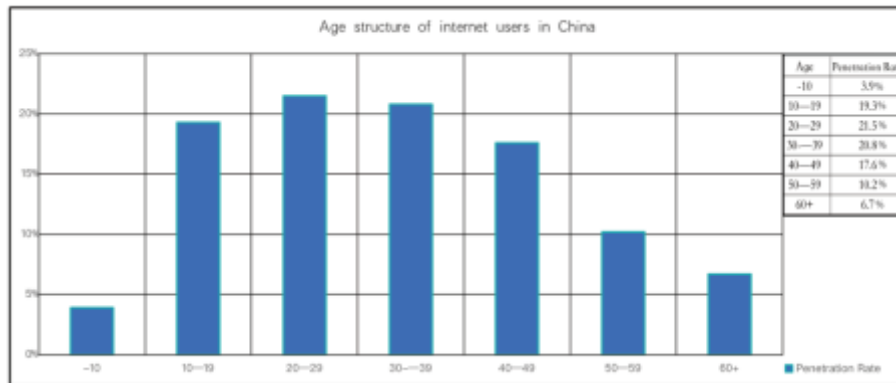

Figure 3 Age structure of internet users in China

4.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

To sum up, with the development of the China Internet Celebrity Economy, Internet celebrities' design aesthetics has a positive influence on consumers' purchase intention. Hence, Internet celebrity aesthetics, internet celebrity attractiveness, internet celebrity credibility, and internet celebrity expertise could be the main factors of internet celebrity's influence on cultural product design in China. Moreover, the study also enhances understanding of the importance of using internet celebrities for product design and promotion in marketing. Furthermore, there are necessary and effective aspects of internet celebrities' influence that companies can use to optimize their marketing activities and leverage their marketing procedures. Moreover, this study demonstrates that utilizing the influence of internet celebrities for advertising and marketing purposes is a cost-effective endeavor. Therefore, this research provides insight into cultural product designing, internet celebrity co-branding, and cultural product design to improve their performance. Today, with the development of the internet economy, many current studies aim to explore the effectiveness of celebrity endorsement as an advertising technique and investigate its relationship with the purchase intention of the buyers. However, there is still a lack of systematic research on the internet celebrity' influence on cultural product design, especially in China which is the biggest online shopping market. Accordingly, it is necessary to study the development of cultural product design in China and identify the factors that influence the development of cultural product design. During the research, limitations are expected to be encountered, such as a lack of research in the cultural product design field. The future studies will also focus primarily on China's cultural product design development. Nevertheless, even though product design is recognized as important in cultural and creative industries, a systematic approach to this field is lacking. This research and the following research hope to contribute knowledge and insight into cultural and creative industry development in China and worldwide.

Acknowledgement

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