Highlights in Art and Design
ISSN: 2957-8787 | Vol. 2, No. 3, 2023

A study of the Problems of Luoshan Shadow puppet Creative Product Design

Taotao Xu [1,2] *, Musdi bin Hj. Shanat [1]

[1] Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, University Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak, Malaysia

[2] School of art and design, Xinyang University, Xinyang, China

[*] **Corresponding author**: Taotao Xu (Email: unimas2019@126.com)

Abstract: With a long history and rich cultural connotation, Luoshan Shadow puppet has become an intangible cultural heritage of China. However, in the midst of modernisation, there are some problems with the design of Luoshan shadow creative products. In this paper, we examined an overview of research into the Luoshan shadow creative products. These products have been criticised for their lack of creativity in all design activities, which has hindered their development. In order to obtain more reliable results, we chose to conduct an extensive questionnaire survey in China. A descriptive analysis of all user data from these questionnaires was carried out. 379 participants' data showed the theme of this study; i. problems of stylistic design; ii. problems of lack of distinctiveness; and iii. problems of overpricing. These findings are beneficial to further research on the innovative design of Luoshan shadow creative products.

Keywords: Luoshan shadow puppets; Creative product design; Problems and causes.

1. Introduction

Luoshan shadow puppet is one of the art forms of traditional Chinese culture and has a history of hundreds of years. It has also modernised with the changing times and become a design material for creative products. Currently, a diversity of design trends has been observed in Luoshan shadow creative products. Some designers have combined the image of Luoshan shadow with modern elements to create some novel products, such as Luoshan shadow mobile phone cases and Luoshan shadow watches. These products not only retain a traditional cultural identity, but also have a modern and stylish touch that is popular with young people. Moreover, there are also designers who combine the image of Luoshan shadow with other cultural elements to create cross-cultural products, such as creative products that collaborate between Luoshan shadow and Japanese cartoon characters, and creative products that combine Luoshan shadow with European and American styles. Such products not only have a cross-cultural character but also appeal to a wider audience. However, many of these products, like those on sale in most other regions, are simple imitations, copies and reproductions of cultural elements, with a serious lack of cultural connotation and original design creativity. There are still various problems with the design of Luoshan shadow creative products.

Most of what is currently on the market are traditional shapes and patterns of the Luoshan shadow products, which lack novel design elements and creative incorporation. This has resulted in fewer users of Luoshan shadow creative products and has prevented them from attracting more young consumers. Also, modern consumer demand for products is increasingly focused on practicality and functionality, while most of Luoshan shadow creative products are only decorative, which has led to an insufficient competitiveness of these products in the market.

As it is a relatively new research issue, there are currently fewer in-depth studies on Luoshan shadow creative products. However, relevant studies have also outlined pathways for the design of Luoshan shadow creative products. The literature [1] explores the development of Luoshan shadow tourism merchandise combined with modern management techniques and modern consumer psychology. It provides useful insights into how Luoshan shadow can build creative product development pathways. This view was further taken up in later literature. The literature [2] proposes a tourist souvenir related to the Luoshan shadow, which will certainly be welcomed by tourists. Meanwhile, the literature [3] suggests that designers should deconstruct and reorganise the pattern according to its original form of Luoshan shadow shape, adding the designer's unique creativity and his own design concept. Furthermore, unlike specific design methods and strategies, the paper [4] explores how to create and protect the intellectual property rights of Luoshan shadow cultural and creative brands. These studies not only introduce the cultural elements, pattern elements and colour schemes of the Luoshan shadow art, but also summarise what decorative elements are suitable for modern creative product design, and also make some research on what the use of Luoshan shadow elements and product knowledge protection is.

2. Research objectives

In this study, we aim to answer and discuss the following questions in a comprehensive manner (based on our questionnaire).

What are your views on the current state of Luoshan shadow creative products?

What are the implications of these issues for the Luoshan shadow creative design?

Based on your previous experience, what are the important factors in the design of Luoshan shadow creative products?

What suggestions, modifications and improvements do you think would be more appropriate for the design of Luoshan shadow creative products?

3. Research Methodology

This study was drawn from my practice in the Luoshan

shadow creative products. The researcher went into Xinyang City to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what the issues involved were. During the research process, "Problems in the creative design of Luoshan shadow puppets" became an important theme. Firstly, we introduce the location of this study in China, the creative products and the relevant statistical information. This is followed by a questionnaire. The final section details what design problems exist in the Luoshan shadow creative products.

The researcher conducted a questionnaire survey through a longer period of time in China. In order to collect data, the researcher's data collection started from June 8, 2022 and ended on December 8, 2022. Through a continuous period of six months of observation and data collection, we were able to gain a complete understanding of what the current situation is in the Luoshan shadow creative product design in order to make relevant judgments with a view to making relevant judgments.

Survey design was drawn from a questionnaire on the design of cultural and creative products by Yiting Liu and Yuehan Wang. Part 1was the cover, which mainly included an introduction and the title of the questionnaire. Part 2 was information on those interviewed, including gender, age, occupation, industry, income, education, and buying habits of creative products. Part 3 was the main body of the questionnaire and involved a variety of question types such as single choice, multiple choice and fill in the blank questions. We used these questions in this questionnaire to make an accurate and specific determination of what was wrong with the design of Luoshan shadow creative products, and to conduct a descriptive analysis to obtain necessary survey information.

In processing the data, we used SPSS analysis software to make a descriptive statistical analysis of our questionnaire data. Data from our research was collated, categorised, simplified or charted in order to describe and summarise its characteristics. We grouped respondents by region and by demographic characteristics to describe what problems they had with these products and what they would suggest to improve their design. A comparative analysis was carried out to obtain clues to what these product design problems were. This method of analysis helped us to understand what the respondents' needs and preferences were. It is the starting point for the work on Luoshan shadow creative product design.

4. Results

As shown in Table 1, descriptive statistics were obtained for all 379 questionnaires with background information. 184 of these respondents were aged 25-35, or 48.549%, and the smallest value was for those aged 20 to 25, or 10.554%. According to an analysis of the frequency of education, 58 people have a senior high school education or less, accounting for 15.303%. 147 secondary school qualifications, or 38.786% of the total. Total number of undergraduates was 157, representing a percentage of 41.425%. 17 persons, or 4.485%, had postgraduate degrees or higher. As can be seen from the gender frequency analysis, 196 males, or 51.715%, and 183 females, or 48.285%, were present. As shown by the frequency analysis of occupations, 250 (65.963%) were employees of enterprises, 40 (10.554%) were students at school, 34 (8.971%) were self-employed, 32 (8.443%) were employees of institutions and agencies, 14 (3.694%) were non-regularly employed or unemployed, and 9 (2.375%) were farmers. 3.694%; the number of farmers was 9, or 2.375%. Among them, those working in enterprises (65.963%) were the highest and farmers (2.375%) were the lowest.

Table 1. Background of the Participants

Item	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Age	1	40	10.554	10.554
	2	184	48.549	59.103
	3	99	26.121	85.224
	4	56	14.776	100
Academic qualifications	1	58	15.303	15.303
	2	147	38.786	54.09
	3	157	41.425	95.515
	4	17	4.485	100
Years of work	1	40	10.554	10.554
	2	62	16.359	26.913
	3	121	31.926	58.839
	4	156	41.161	100
Gender	1	196	51.715	51.715
	2	183	48.285	100
Occupation	4	250	65.963	65.963
	3	40	10.554	76.517
	2	34	8.971	85.488
	5	32	8.443	93.931
	6	14	3.694	97.625
	1	9	2.375	100
Total		379	100.000	100.000

As shown in Table 2, we conducted descriptive statistics on a total of 379 respondents' responses towards what problems exist in the Luoshan shadow creative products. As revealed by the frequency analysis of outdated style, 228 people chose this item, representing a percentage of 60.158%. 166 people did not select this item, representing a percentage of 43.799%. 113 people, or 29.815%, chose the item of poor quality. A total of 154 people, or 40.633%, chose the item "inconvenience of carrying". Those who chose the item not very useful were 50 (13.193%). 57 people (15.04%) chose the other option.

Table 2. Problems in design

Item	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Overpriced	0	179	47.23	47.23
	1	200	52.77	100
Outdated style	0	151	39.842	39.842
	1	228	60.158	100
No character	0	213	56.201	56.201
	1	166	43.799	100
Low quality	0	266	70.185	70.185
	1	113	29.815	100
Not easy to carry	0	225	59.367	59.367
	1	154	40.633	100
Not very practical	0	329	86.807	86.807
	1	50	13.193	100
Other	0	322	84.96	84.96
	1	57	15.04	100
Total		379	100.000	100.000

As shown in Table 3, we have analysed what 379 respondents suggested for the Luoshan shadow creative product design. According to analysis of the innovative products, 218 people (57.52%) selected this item. 174 people (45.91%) chose the item quality enhancement. A total of 207 people (54.617%) chose the item of practical value. Only 20 people chose that option other, which was the smallest percentage (5.227%).

Table 3. Participants' expectations of the product

Item	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
New products	Selected	218	57.52	57.52
	Not selected	161	42.48	100
Quality enhancement	Not selected	205	54.09	54.09
	Selected	174	45.91	100
Practical value	Selected	207	54.617	54.617
	Not selected	172	45.383	100
Product Face	Not selected	232	61.214	61.214
	Selected	147	38.786	100
Other 2	Not selected	359	94.723	94.723
	Selected	20	5.277	100
Total		379	100.000	100.000

5. Disscution

What we have found generally matches those of previous studies. There are many problems with the Luoshan shadow creative product design, including outdated patterns, lack of character and high prices.

Outdated styles were one of the most frequently reported problems by respondents. Many designers do not effectively integrate with Luoshan Shadow's characteristics and cultural connotations in all stages of their creative product design. Some of these products are even designed at a lower level, simply printing shadow puppet elements on these products. This is mainly caused by the inadequate market structure, shortage of research and development capacity in cultural technology and insufficient innovation. Low consumer knowledge acceptance and lack of consumer confidence is an important factor limiting innovation in these Luoshan shadow creative products. Moreover, it is not enough to design unique products, and many of those are confined to local areas. It is especially difficult to arouse tourists' desire to buy them because of their low level of innovation and low practicality. Also, many designers are not very innovative and only cater to what travellers want with repetitive products. Currently, designers are mostly working on their own hobby of designing creative products for the Luoshan shadow. Meanwhile, there is a lack of a systematic chain of creative product development for these products.

A lack of distinctiveness was another very important issue that emerged from all the questionnaire surveys. Some of these creative products of Loshan shadow are in reality poorly designed and of low quality, which makes consumers very disappointed. From a practical point of view, a homogeneous product of Luoshan shadow creative products is manifested by its similarity in content with other regions' shadow products. Take a canvas bag as an example, many designers directly apply the shadow images without refinement to the cloth bag design, making it impossible for ordinary consumers to distinguish among them. With more of these same types of products, the problem of high similarity in design form and little differentiation has emerged in the Luoshan shadow creative products. The development of creative products is further constrained by their low level of creativity, single methods and means. It is difficult for us to find deeper creative offerings in each scenic spot or website.

High prices were also an important concern for those who were interviewed. Compared to similar products in other regions, these creative products lacking cultural connotations of Luoshan shadow have no price advantage and do not sell well. Their high prices are mainly due to the small scale of production and the up-market positioning of these creative products. As these creative products are aimed at a predominantly local consumer base, there is a relatively small scale of production that does not allow for mass production and assembly line operations, thus also resulting in them being more expensive. Furthermore, many of these creative products are marketed at a higher end, targeting a higher income group, which results in correspondingly higher prices.

This study was analysed descriptively using survey questionnaires. Indeed, as Qianqian Hao explains what is still a low level of creative product design for the Luoshan shadow. This study analyses the outdated style, lack of distinctiveness and high price of Longshan shadow creative products. A majority of those who participated mentioned that they would like to see this type of creative product constantly being introduced, as they felt that this would elicit their own anticipation and enjoyment of these products. Apart from their prices, respondents were also concerned about the practical value of Luoshan shadow creative products. However, "product image" was described as the least critical principle, with a higher number of people checking this item.

6. Conclusion

This study examines what problems exist in the design of Luoshan shadow creative products and the reasons for their creation. Most of the Luoshan shadow creative products currently on the market are simple copies or improvements, lacking in innovation and personalisation, which makes these products less attractive. In fact, it is necessary for designers to consider what the consumer wants and prefers in these

products design. However, some manufacturers lack research and analysis of the consumer market and develop products blindly, resulting in poor market adaptability and low sales. Combining all these aspects, there are many problems with the Luoshan shadow creative product design, which need to be solved by both manufacturers and designers.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Henan Provincial Philosophy Planning Office, and those staff members who were directly or indirectly involved in completing this study.

Project Funding: This research was supported by Special Project Funding for Henan Province Philosophy and Social Science Planning (2022XWH237).

References

[1] Jinfei Yan , Ranran Xu , Yao Li(2012). Research on the development of tourism commodities of intangible cultural heritage: the example of shadow puppets in Luoshan County. Brand,(11).

[2] Xiaohui Zhang. (2015). Characteristic art and cultural brands of the Central Plains to promote the construction of heritage innovation zone of Chinese historical civilization. Modern Decoration (Theory) (02),2 37-238. doi: CNKI: SUN: XDZS. 0.2015-02-213.

[3] Qianqian Hao. (2021). Research on the application of shadow elements in visual communication design. Western Leather (14), 37-38. doi; CNKI:SUN:XBPG.0.2021-14-018.

[4] Lulu Yang. (2022). Intellectual property protection of intangible cultural heritage brands in traditional villages of Henan Province: The example of Luoshan shadow puppets. Legal Expo (12), 8-11. doi: CNKI:SUN:FBZX.0.2022-12-003.

[5] Xin Zhao. (2022). Creative Design and Application of Yunnan "Yunhua" Cultural and Creative Products (Master's thesis, Yunnan Academy of Arts). https: // kns.cnki.net / KCMS / detail / detail.aspx ? dbname = CMFD202202 & filename = 1022569457.nh.

[6] Yuehan Wang. (2019). Research on the application of morphosyntax in the design of cultural and creative products (Master's thesis, Jingdezhen University of Ceramics). https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbname=CMFD202001&filename=1019251385.nh.

[7] Yiting Liu. (2019). Research and Application of Cultural and Creative Product Design for Tangshan Shadow puppeters (Master's thesis, Beijing Printing Institute). https: // kns.cnki.net / KCMS / detail / detail.aspx ? dbname = CMFD202001 & filename=1020013738.nh.

[8] Lin Gao & T.C.,Song (2022). Research on the application of blind box cultural and creative product development based on the element of Luoshan shadow puppet head stubble. Tomorrow's Style (06), 147-150. doi: CNKI: SUN: MRFS. 0. 2022-06-038.