

Research on the Cultural and Museum Intellectual Property of Yongle Palace

Cong Chen and Puvasa Ruangchewin*

Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Burapha University, Chon Buri 20131, Thailand

(*Corresponding author's e-mail: puvasa@gmail.com)

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Abstract

This paper explores the potential of IP development in China's cultural industry by taking Yongle Palace in Yuncheng City, Shanxi Province as a case study, focusing on how to construct and promote cultural intellectual property to enhance its market value and influence. Despite Yongle Palace's significant status in traditional Chinese culture, it lags behind other well-known cultural attractions, such as the Forbidden City and Dunhuang, in terms of recognition and marketization. Addressing this phenomenon, the study first analyzes the main challenges faced by the site's cultural and creative products-limited market reach and constraints in promotional resources-and draws on successful international IP cases and IP operation strategies from other domestic attractions. On this basis, the research proposes a comprehensive set of IP construction and marketization strategies for Yongle Palace, including but not limited to innovative product design, adoption of strategies targeting younger markets, and cross-brand collaboration. By examining the historical and artistic value of the murals and architecture of Yongle Palace, the paper deeply explores various aspects such as the palace's murals and architecture, and further develops and constructs iconic cultural industry intellectual property (IP). Additionally, the paper presents a detailed study on the promotion and marketization strategies of Yongle Palace IP, designing a comprehensive IP marketing plan covering aspects such as clothing, food, accommodation, travel, and entertainment, with the aim of enhancing the influence and market value of Yongle Palace's cultural intellectual property. This research is of significant importance for improving the commercial benefits of China's traditional cultural heritage, and for providing practical pathways for the marketization and internationalization of the cultural industry.

Keywords: K Yongle palace, Intellectual Property (IP), Cultural communication, Creative products

Introduction

In the traditional cultural and creative industry, there is a wide variety of cultural and creative products for scenic areas. These products, in their design, highlight the connection with the specific culture of the scenic areas and become a key medium for interaction between tourists and scenic culture. Typical product lines include clothing inspired by scenic spots (such as themed T-shirts, hats, scarves, etc.), decorative items (including fridge magnets, keychains, wall decorations, miniature ornaments, etc.), stationery (like distinctive notebooks, postcards, stamps, bookmarks), as well as puzzles and educational toys featuring scenic spots. However, in the actual market environment, the design of cultural and creative products for scenic areas often faces the challenge of homogenization, lack of support from

professional R&D teams, insufficient integration with scenic culture, and inadequate investment in theoretical research. In response to these issues, scholars Zhou Meiyu and Sun Xin suggest the application of mature industrial design methods, such as human-centered design concepts, to the design of cultural and creative products, and emphasize the need to consider regional socio-economic, technological resources, and distinctive cultural factors during the development process. Furthermore, they point out that in-depth research into museum collections facilitates the effective transformation and dissemination of cultural elements. The marketization and development of cultural and creative products for scenic areas faces two major challenges: firstly, the actual reach of the products is

often limited to visitors of the scenic areas or museums, resulting in limited income potential. According to related research (Fan, 2019), only about 10% of visitors choose to purchase cultural and creative products. Secondly, the cultural promotion work of scenic spots and museums faces financial and resource constraints, especially against the backdrop of increasing costs to acquire internet traffic. Effectively promoting cultural and creative products to a broader audience, particularly young people, is a significant challenge. Due to these two issues, the market growth potential of cultural and creative products for scenic areas is limited.

In the current cultural industry field, the term “IP” (Intellectual Property) has been frequently mentioned and has become a hot topic of common concern in the industry and academia. Originally, “Intellectual Property” was defined as the exclusive property rights enjoyed by rights holders over the results of their intellectual labor. Internationally, “IP” is also referred to as a “multimedia franchise,” a concept that encompasses a general term for various media forms extended from original works, such as film, animation, games, and related physical merchandise. These works usually gain success in one media form through a character or worldview and then spread to other media forms through licensing agreements. For example, the film adaptation of the video game “Tomb Raider” and the transformation of the novel “Meng Hua Lu” into a TV series are representatives of this phenomenon.

Internationally, IPs that have undergone long-term accumulation and cultural sedimentation have shown significant results. Taking Disney’s “Mickey Mouse” as an example, since its birth in 1928, it has not only become

a symbol of American and global popular culture but has also brought at least \$52 billion in revenue for Disney. According to media surveys, “Mickey Mouse” has a global recognition rate of 97%, which even surpasses Santa Claus. Moreover, the total income of “Pokémon” has reached \$88 billion, “Winnie the Pooh” at \$48.5 billion, and “Star Wars” at \$46.7 billion (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.), these figures fully demonstrate the importance of IP construction in the development of the cultural industry and provide valuable references for current industry development.

In China, with the “14th Five-Year” cultural industry development plan issued by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2021, the state has made clear plans for the development of the cultural and tourism industries, especially promoting the deep integration of culture and tourism, which has become the key to the development of culture and tourism in the next five years. Under such policy guidance, not only traditional literature, animation, and film and television works, but also national treasures such as the “Along the River During the Qingming Festival”, the “Zenghou Yi Chime Bells”, as well as historical relics such as the Dunhuang Feitian murals and the Terracotta Warriors, and even top events such as marathons and the World Cup are regarded as cultural IPs with development potential. (Qi, 2021) With strong encouragement from national policies, major scenic spots and cultural tourism units are actively promoting the deep integration of culture and tourism. Among them, the construction of Intellectual Property (IP) has become a core link in the implementation strategy.



Figure 1 Intellectual Property of Wuzhen, Pingyao and Forbidden City

A is Wuzhen’s Drama Festival

B is Pingyao Ancient City’s large-scale performance “See Pingyao Again”

C is The Forbidden City’s TV series “Startling by Each Step”

Source: <https://www.bilibili.com/read/cv11775305/>

Upon examining successful cases within the industry, it is clear that while there are various paths to success, the fundamental strategies for IP (Intellectual Property) operation are not complex. Taking Wuzhen as an example, this model highlights the effective combination of collaborative IP and traffic, which in turn enhances the competitive edge of the scenic area in cultural and tourism integration development. Compared to popular ancient towns like Zhouzhuang, Tongli, and Xitang, Wuzhen did not initially have a distinct personal identity at the beginning. (Zheng & Wang, 2019) However, today, among many small towns, Wuzhen leads the trend with its significant achievements in cultural and tourism integration, establishing a new standard for distinctive small towns. The successful hosting of events such as the World Internet Conference and the Wuzhen Theatre Festival has not only enriched the scenic beauty of Wuzhen's Jiangnan water towns but has also turned it into an important platform for cultural and artistic exchange, truly realizing the connotation of a cultural ancient town. These event IPs have brought not only visitor and customer flow but more importantly, have focused media branding effects and public attention. In the age of the internet, traffic is capital. By integrating with event IPs, Wuzhen has not only enhanced its brand competitiveness but also created sustained benefits in attracting tourists and developing the convention and exhibition economy.

Another example is the Pingyao model, which focuses on refining cultural experiences through original IPs and enhancing tourism value. The Pingyao Ancient City and its experience drama "See You Again, Pingyao" is another success story of cultural and tourism integration. Although the cultural resources and tourism landscapes of Pingyao Ancient City are not as rich as those of other similar attractions, the success of "See You Again, Pingyao" is due to its creation of a new form of tourism performance and development model. The drama weaves scattered historical culture and folk stories into a vivid picture, attracting tourists' sustained attention, driving the consumption economy, and expanding the construction of scenic areas, forming a virtuous cycle of cultural and tourism integration.

As for the Forbidden City model, it emphasizes exploring the core value of IPs and creating cultural and creative benefits through the expansion of IP

connotations. The Palace Museum is not only an outstanding example of the integration of culture and tourism in China but also a leader in IP development, with its IP value reaching billions. Looking back at the ten-year development history of the Forbidden City's IP, the starting point was the use of new media, especially active interactions on Weibo, which transformed the Forbidden City from a closed cultural institution into a popular cultural space. The key to the Forbidden City becoming an internet sensation was riding the wave of popular culture, such as the hit TV series "Scarlet Heart," which led to a series of fun Weibo posts and cultural and creative products. Through careful curation and cross-industry cooperation, the Forbidden City has not only expanded the experiential scenes and emotional reach of the IP but also created sustained growth in cultural and creative benefits, becoming a leader in the national trend culture.

There are now various methods for promoting new cultural and creative initiatives, including innovative museum cultural and creative product designs, youth-oriented strategies, and cross-branding, among others. Research by Yanbin and Anxia (2022) mentioned that museum cultural and creative product design needs to retain the essence of culture while injecting new creative elements. The case of Dunhuang proves this: through continuous innovation, Dunhuang cultural and creative products utilize IP licensing to launch products on e-commerce platforms in categories including digital 3C, daily stationery, national trend fashion, as well as a series of themed products such as Dunhuang Tiangong Office and Dunhuang Music, etc. This innovative cross-industry cooperation has achieved a perfect combination of traditional elements with modern consumer demands. The youth-oriented strategy is the key to the success of Dunhuang's new cultural and creative endeavors. Dunhuang combines elements common in young people's daily lives, such as games and music, presenting Dunhuang culture in innovative ways through games like "Fantasy Westward Journey," not only showcasing traditional cultural symbols but also attracting deep participation from the youth. Promoting culture in a way that resonates with young people makes cultural heritage more dynamic and more relevant to the lifestyles of the younger generation. Cross-branding is another effective approach for the implementation of new cultural and

creative initiatives. As pointed out by Xu Yiyun and Hu Yongquan in their research, the integration strategy of “IP + New Cultural and Creative” under the perspective of ecological coupling can achieve a symbiosis of cultural and commercial values. The collaboration between Dunhuang IP and well-known brands like Pechoin not only brings deep cultural value to the brand but also opens up wider channels for the spread of Dunhuang culture. Through such methods, cultural IP and commercial brands achieve a win-win situation,

enhancing market vitality and the strength of cultural dissemination. Overall, the implementation of new cultural and creative initiatives needs to combine the purchasing habits of modern consumers, through innovative product design, youth-oriented communication strategies, and brand cross-branding, seamlessly integrating traditional culture with modern lifestyles. This not only benefits cultural heritage and development but also provides new ideas and possibilities for the market expansion of museum cultural and creative products.

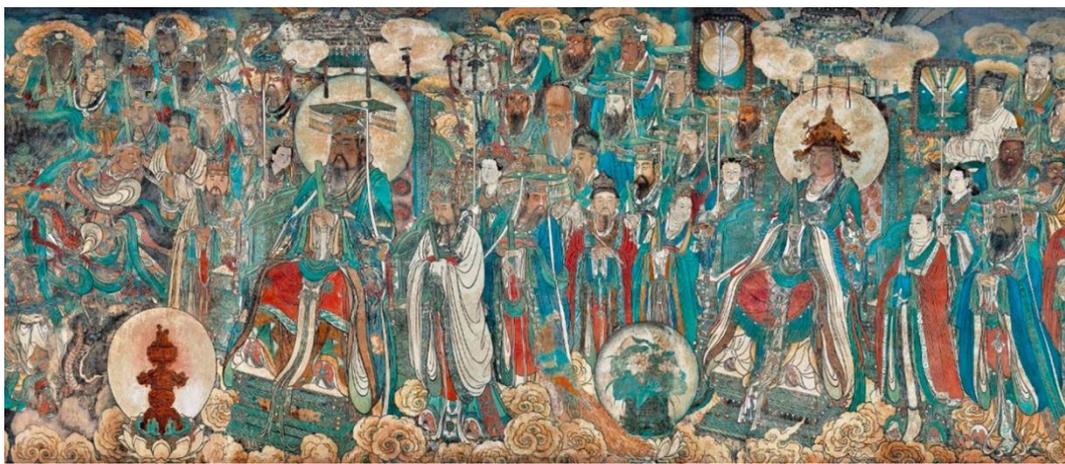


Figure 2 Part of the Yongle Palace mural “Chaoyuan Picture”

Source: Shanxi Yongle Palace Mural Protection Research Institute, 1325 AD

The Yongle Palace, located in Ruicheng County of Yuncheng City in Shanxi Province, China, stands as a Daoist temple with profound historical significance. Founded during the Yuan Dynasty (1247-1358 AD), it was initially established as an ancestral shrine to commemorate Lü Dongbin, one of the revered Eight Immortals of Daoism, thereby acquiring its name from Lü Dongbin’s traditional hometown, Yongle Town. Also known as the Great Purity and Longevity Palace, Yongle Palace is famed for its majestic scale and the treasured murals within. These murals not only display the pinnacle of Yuan Dynasty painting skills but also hold a pivotal place in the art of Oriental murals. As one of the most intact and largest Daoist temples in China, it has been designated as one of the first key national cultural relics protection units and has earned the distinction of a AAAA-level tourist spot. The architectural design of Yongle Palace epitomizes the classical form of Yuan Dynasty Daoist structures, integrating the Song Dynasty’s “construction methods” with the “reduced column method” from the Liao and Jin periods, leading

to a distinctive architectural style. The murals of Yongle Palace are not only the essence of Daoist culture but also one of Shanxi Province’s “Three Treasures,” predating the European Renaissance and almost contemporary with the Yuan Dynasty, thus garnering international acclaim. The existing mural area in Yongle Palace covers 1005.68 square meters (see Figure 2) and is one of the most complete and thematically diverse collections of Yuan Dynasty murals in China. Despite its crucial role in Daoist and traditional Chinese culture, Yongle Palace’s renown is significantly less than internationally famous museums such as the Forbidden City and the Dunhuang murals. This disparity may stem from certain limitations in its cultural tourism model. Currently, the temple’s cultural dissemination and utilization are rather monolithic, failing to fully mine the deep-seated historical, cultural, and artistic values. There is considerable room for improvement in the development of the creative industries, media promotion, and marketing strategies. In light of this, the present study aims to delve into multiple aspects of the murals and

architecture of Yongle Palace to develop and construct iconic cultural industry intellectual property (IP) . Furthermore, this paper will conduct a detailed study of the marketing strategies for the Yongle Palace IP, designing a comprehensive IP marketing plan that encompasses clothing, food, accommodation, travel, entertainment, and other facets, with the goal of enhancing the influence and market value of the Yongle Palace cultural IP.

Objective

The initial aim of this study is to conduct an intellectual property (IP) survey and compilation for Yongle Palace, itemizing distinctive elements such as characters from the murals and various pattern components, and then categorizing them, thus establishing a foundational image library and set of elements for the Yongle Palace IP.

The second objective is to design a comprehensive IP marketing scheme that encompasses various aspects including apparel, cuisine, accommodation, transportation, and entertainment, with the anticipation of augmenting the influence and market value of Yongle Palace’s cultural intellectual property.

Method

This research builds upon the foundation of previous studies and employs principles of art management, integrating multidisciplinary theories from sociology, folklore, aesthetics, and history. Focusing on Yongle Palace, it seeks to explore its architecture, murals, characters, and the abstraction and development of Yongle Palace’s cultural and museum IP. The main research methods are as follows:



Figure 3 Field trip to Yongle Palace:A- D are transportation, E-H are the author’s visit photos
Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

Literature review

This approach primarily involves the collection and acquisition of information through publicly published works, museum resources, and online searches. Given that this paper focuses on the cultural and museum IP of Yongle Palace, the gathering of image resources from

Yongle Palace is particularly crucial. The images related to Yongle Palace examined in this research are predominantly derived from publicly available publications, museums, and online platforms. It is worth noting that interior photography is not permitted in Yongle Palace, hence only official website and media

interviews sanctioned by the palace have provided some of the visual materials. Sorting, analyzing, and synthesizing these materials form the research foundation of this paper.

Interdisciplinary research method

The research synthesizes disciplines such as art, aesthetics, culture, and tourism management before proposing a scheme for Yongle Palace’s cultural and museum IP, including how to establish and disseminate the IP.

Field research

(a) Survey Method

To thoroughly investigate the architecture, murals, characters, and narratives of Yongle Palace, the author of this paper conducted on-site inspections. Through interviews, observations, and personal experiences, firsthand data were collected to address the limitations of literature research. Field visits inject new vitality into related studies of Yongle Palace and are conducive to providing more scientific and practical suggestions for its conservation, inheritance, and development.



Figure 4 Field trip to Yongle Palace: A-D Relocated Museum

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)



Figure 5 Field trip to Yongle Palace: A and B are Dragon and Tiger Gate,

C and D are Sanqing Hall, E and F are Chunyang Hall, G and H are Chongyang Hall

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

(b) Interview Method

Moreover, the author conducted face-to-face interviews with different demographic groups, including:

Managers of Yongle Palace: Interviews with several individuals responsible for cultural management (1 person), cultural product development (1 person), business and ticket pricing (1 person) were conducted.

The goal is to understand their past work plans and objectives for cultural creativity and cultural product development, as well as their goals for the upcoming year.

Residents near Yongle Palace: Primarily, residents who interact with Yongle Palace frequently, especially those who have worked with the Palace (3 people) or are employees of third-party suppliers (3 people), are interviewed to glean insights into the current tourism status of Yongle Palace from a local perspective.

Entrepreneurs in the Tourism Industry: Communication is sought with entrepreneurs experienced in cultural management, cultural product development, business, and ticket pricing (1 travel company head, 3 tour guides), ideally those who have collaborated with Yongle Palace or other traditional Chinese scenic spots. The expectation is to gain an understanding of their views on cultural creativity, cultural management, and perspectives on Yongle Palace.

(c) Questionnaire Survey Method

This involves designing appropriate questionnaires and distributing them in areas near Yongle Palace or other regions familiar with it to identify the key characteristics of Yongle Palace. A critical aspect of designing the questionnaire is selecting the correct respondents, ensuring both a wide range of subjects and

a representation of various perspectives. Consequently, the primary respondents for the questionnaire survey are tourists, with a minimum target of 50 participants.

Result

1. The Yongle Palace cultural and museum IP and conceptual framework

Yongle Palace, located in Ruicheng County, Yuncheng City, Shanxi Province, China, is a Taoist temple complex with profound historical significance. Founded during the Yuan Dynasty (1247-1358), it was initially established as an ancestral shrine to commemorate Lv Dongbin, one of the revered Eight Immortals of Taoism, which consequently gave the name to Lv Dongbin's traditional hometown, Yongle Town. Also known as the Grand Palace of Eternal Joy, Yongle Palace is renowned for its majestic scale and the precious frescoes within, which not only represent the pinnacle of painting from the Yuan era but also hold a pivotal position in the art of Oriental murals. As one of China's most intact and largest Taoist temples, it has been designated as one of the first key national cultural relics for protection and has been awarded the title of a AAAA-level tourist attraction. The frescoes of Yongle Palace are not only the essence of Taoist culture but also one of the "Three Treasures" of Shanxi Province, granting it international acclaim.

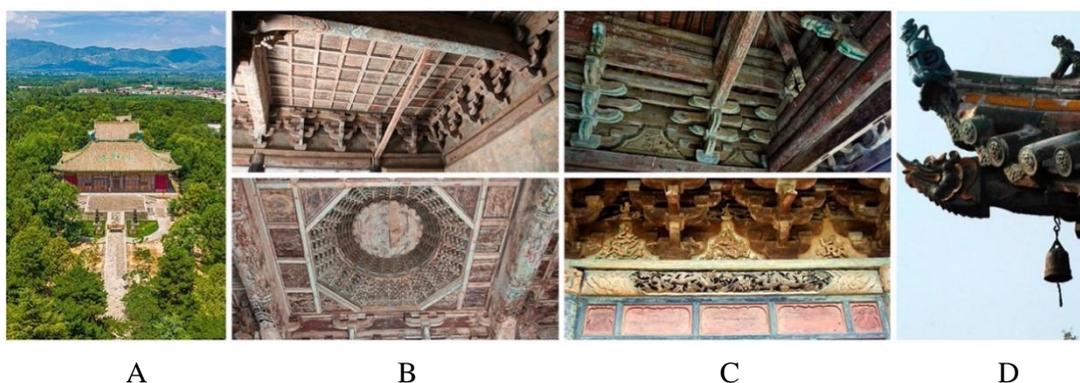


Figure 6 Yongle Palace's ancient royal architectural complex

A is the aerial view of Yongle Palace, B is the ceiling "caisson,"

C and D are the overhanging eaves

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

Yongle Palace is an ancient architectural complex with royal institutional features, where architecture and sacred art are seamlessly integrated. As early as 1240,

Yongle Palace was promoted from a shrine to a palace under the supervision of Qiu Chuji's disciple, Song Defang, receiving the honor of an imperial upgrade. The

palace's construction employed royal architectural techniques, blending ancient architectural clusters, natural ecology, Taoist stories, and imperial dignity, highlighting the sacredness of art as perceived by the royal court. The layout of Yongle Palace is organized as a triple-hall system consisting of the Wuji Gate, Sanqing Hall, Pure Yang Hall, and Chongyang Hall. These halls not only exhibit innovative craftsmanship, inheriting the construction methods of the Song Dynasty and the column-reducing techniques of the Liao and Jin periods, but also innovatively pave new paths for the development of architectural techniques. The entire complex is arranged in a triple-column layout along a central axis, symbolizing the Taoist philosophy of unity between heaven and man, unfolding like a Taoist scripture and forming a heavenly palace on earth. With its prestigious imperial construction background, Yongle Palace showcases the solemnity and majesty of ancient royal architecture, which, in concert with the surrounding natural ecology and traditional Taoist cultural narratives, creates a unique historical and cultural tableau.

The murals of Yongle Palace represent a true manifestation of indigenous Chinese frescoes, authentically depicting the societal ethos of 700 years ago. As the crowning achievement of Yuan Dynasty temple frescoes, Yongle Palace houses the majority, with four out of the five official Yuan Dynasty mural complexes in the nation. These frescoes comprise the most extensive and well-preserved collection of paintings with the largest number of figures and single fresco areas, see Figure 2. Poets have lauded these murals: "The Sanqing of Yongle sketched with iron lines, robes and belts of Cao and Wu combining strength with

softness. The remnants of Tang and Song styles fill these walls, rightly acclaimed as the foremost in the world." The murals of Yongle Palace are the only ancient Chinese religious frescoes that can compare with those of Dunhuang, representing not only the sublimation of local art and culture but also embodying both the lofty pantheon of immortals and the down-to-earth ambience of daily life. Constructed intermittently over a century, the frescoes' contents are diverse and imbued with profound social significance. Here, the reflections of social sciences and humanities, the essence of Taoist thought, and the exquisite artistry are interwoven, constructing breath-taking pictorial narratives.

The relocation of Yongle Palace is a monumental event in the history of Chinese cultural relics conservation, see Figure 4. From 1957 to 1966, due to the management of the Yellow River, the state made a significant decision: to protect Yongle Palace at all costs by relocating it from its original site to a new location. Premier Zhou Enlai personally directed the project, emphasizing the need to safeguard this precious cultural heritage. The nine-year relocation moved Yongle Palace as a whole 20 kilometers to Ruicheng County from Yongle Town. The colossal undertaking involved relocating everything from steles and bricks, architectural structures, frescoes, tombs, to plants and trees. Components numbered in the thousands, some weighing as much as ten tons. This process not only demonstrated China's respect and determination to protect its cultural heritage but also showcased the sophistication and achievements of Chinese cultural relic conservation techniques.

Table 1 Overview of Yongle Palace

No.	Type	Description
1	Figures	The palace's murals feature over 300 deities, completed over more than 100 years.
2	History	With 800 years of history, it predates the European Renaissance.
3	Murals	The total area of all murals is over 1000 m ² , of which the Sanqing Hall covers 403.34 m ² , measuring 94.68 m in length and 4.26 m in height.
4	Relocation	The Yongle Palace relocation project lasted approximately 10 years, with over 2000 pages of handwritten notes preserved.
5	Architecture	During relocation: the largest mural measured 1005.68 m ² , the buildings covered an area of up to 15 hectares, with the oldest building over 700 years old.

The mural artistry of Yongle Palace represents the pinnacle of ancient Chinese painting, with an influence that extends well beyond national boundaries, securing a place as a rare monumental work in the annals of world art history. These murals boast a richness in content and grandeur in scale, incorporating a variety of figures that exhibit the exquisite skill of ancient painters. With vibrant, splendid colors and smooth, natural lines, these paintings accompanied the entirety of the Yuan dynasty. Their creation predates even the European Renaissance, attesting to the profound impact and enduring history of Chinese culture in the arts. The murals of Yongle Palace are not merely exemplars of artistic excellence; they also signify the pivotal markers of Chinese cultural heritage.

As part of the conceptual framework, this paper will proceed to enumerate and organize the Intellectual Property (IP) elements of Yongle Palace in terms of Art and Culture, including its murals and architecture, as well as the Taoist culture encapsulated within the palace. Subsequently, the paper will delve into Analysis and Integration from the perspectives of Aesthetic Theory, Cultural Theory, and Communication Theory. The expected outcome is to develop solutions for the application of Yongle Palace's cultural IP in various commercial products and activities, providing guidance for the development and collaboration of cultural and creative enterprises related to Yongle Palace.

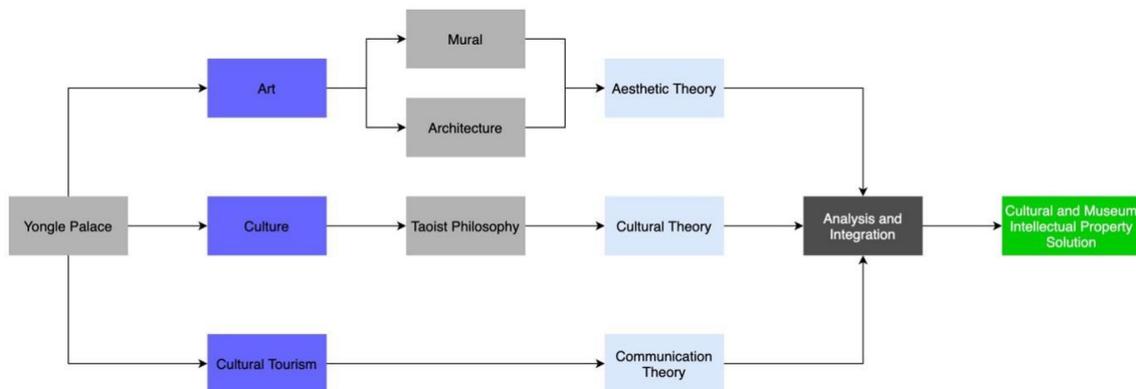


Figure 7 Conceptual Framework

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

2. Inventory and organization of IP elements of Yongle palace

The murals of Yongle Palace are an integration of Taoist philosophy and sublime artistic expression. The creation of the murals spanned a century, with intermittent periods of construction that resulted in a comprehensive depiction embodying profound social content. The murals include an array of elements such as deities and immortals, heavenly creatures, ritual implements, fantastical immortal realms, and narratives of immortal assemblies. A detailed introduction follows.

The immortals of Yongle palace

In the murals of Yongle Palace, the images of over 300 deities were meticulously crafted over a century, shown in Figure 8 and Table 2. Among the most famous murals is the “Assembly of Immortals,” which presents a grand assembly of immortals paying homage, depicting

the palace's unique pantheon of duty-bound deities. These divine figures are categorized into three main types: the main gods of the assembly, the civil and military officials, and the assembly of female immortals. Among them, the eight principal deities—Jade Emperor, Earth Mother, East King, West Queen, Hook Chen Emperor, Eternal Life Emperor, Purple Tenuity Emperor, and the Heavenly Lord of Salvation—occupy central positions as core Taoist personages. Others, dubbed as “popular immortal figures” like Thunder God, Rain Master, Great Unity God, and Emperor Wenchang, are widely revered, similar to modern-day internet celebrities. Female figures also hold a significant place, such as Lightning Mother and Lady of Purple Light, the “Peach Girls,” whose images are as popular as a girl music band. Additionally, divine officials such as the Sun and Moon Gods, and the Three Stars of Fortune, are

grouped according to different attributes, each with their sacred mission and esteemed status.

Auspicious Beasts, Ritual Implements, and Totems of Yongle Palace

In the murals of Yongle Palace, ancient auspicious creatures symbolizing good omens and blessings hold significant positions, representing the most characteristic and charming aspects of traditional Chinese culture. These include the mystical dragon and the formidable tiger, as well as the noble phoenix, chiwen, and crane. These creatures not only adorn the murals but also embody profound cultural significance, with each bearing unique cultural meanings and mythological narratives.

The murals of Yongle Palace also meticulously depict the extraordinary ritual implements of the immortals, each with its specific meaning and purpose,

reflecting the identity and religious beliefs of the bearer. The variety of these implements includes those of the gods, female immortals, and the instruments of the Eight Immortals, each presented with exquisite craftsmanship that reveals the deep cultural connotations of Taoist culture.

The Yuan Dynasty painted patterns preserved in the Hall of the Three Purities are among the more intact sections of the Yongle Palace murals. These patterns are characterized by dynamic compositions, smooth lines, and a palette dominated by azure and green hues, deep and layered. The patterns include brocade, cloud and dragon motifs, spirals, lotus, peony, auspicious flowers, naturalistic flowers, pomegranates, squared spirals, scrollwork, and ruyi heads, all representing Taoist totemic elements and epitomizing the essence of Taoist culture and art, a remarkable example of ancient Chinese mural art.



Figure 8 Immortals in Yongle Palace
Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

Table 2 Immortals in Yongle palace

No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Name	West Queen Mother	East King Father	Jade Emperor	Heavenly Lord of Salvation	Eternal Life Emperor	Purple Tenuity Emperor	Great Jade Emperor	Earth Mother
No.	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Name	Taiyi (Supreme Unity)	God of Wealth	Emperor Wenchang	Confucius	Celestial Worthies	To Be Researched	Tianpeng	Tianyou
No.	17	18	19	20	21	22		
Name	Five Elements	The Eight Trigrams Deities	Xuanyuan's Ten Sons	Twelve Yuan Deitie	Thirty-two Lord Generals (part one)	Thirty-two Lord Generals (part two)		



Figure 9 Auspicious animals in the murals of Yongle Palace

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)



Figure 10 Auspicious animals in the murals of Yongle Palace

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)



Figure 11 Auspicious animals in the murals of Yongle Palace
 Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

Architecture and Allusions of Yongle Palace

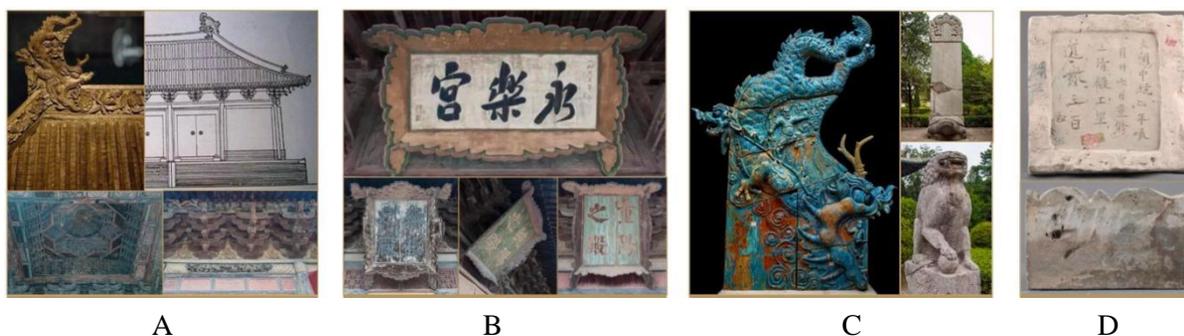


Figure 12 Architectural Elements of Yongle Palace
 A is the architectural structure of Yongle Palace, B is the plaques and calligraphy,
 C is the glazed tiles and sculptures, and D is the artifact bricks.
 Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

The architectural complex of Yongle Palace is a distinguished representation of Yuan dynasty imperial architecture, showcasing the royal architectural style and techniques indicative of the aesthetic ideals of that era. The construction began in 1247, in the second year of Duzong’s reign, and was completed in 1358, in the eighteenth year of the Zhiyuan era, marking an extensive construction period spanning over 110 years. The architectural layout of Yongle Palace is sequentially arranged from south to north, including the palace gate, mountain gate (Qing dynasty), Wuji gate (Yuan dynasty), Hall of the Three Purities (Yuan dynasty), Hall of Pure Yang (Yuan dynasty), and Hall of Double Yang (Yuan dynasty). Architecturally, Yongle Palace assimilated the “architectural methods” of the Song dynasty and the “column-reducing technique” from the Liao and Jin periods, innovating upon them, thus providing new

avenues for the development of later architectural technology. Additionally, the plaques and calligraphy, glazed tiles, sculptures, and cultural bricks of Yongle Palace are distinctive features.

The murals of Yongle Palace not only portray religious ceremonies and mythological figures but also meticulously depict the celestial palaces and architectural styles of the era. Integrating the concept of unity between heaven and man, the murals display the characteristics of Yuan dynasty folk architecture, and contain the evolution of Tang and Song architectural styles. The artistic expression of Yongle Palace, through blue- green landscapes and images of gardens and pavilions, exhibits the cosmic order and the beauty of harmony.

Moreover, the murals of Yongle Palace are replete with rich allusions and dramatic legendary tales, classics of Tang, Song, and Yuan cultures, allowing traditional

mythology to be reimagined in contemporary visual forms. Famous narratives such as “The Eight Immortals Crossing the Sea,” “Zhong and Lü Discussing the Tao,” and “Cultivation on the Double Ninth Festival” not only add storytelling depth to the murals but also provide a

window for viewers to delve into traditional Chinese culture and Taoist beliefs. These narrative murals have made Yongle Palace a treasury of ancient Chinese culture and art.

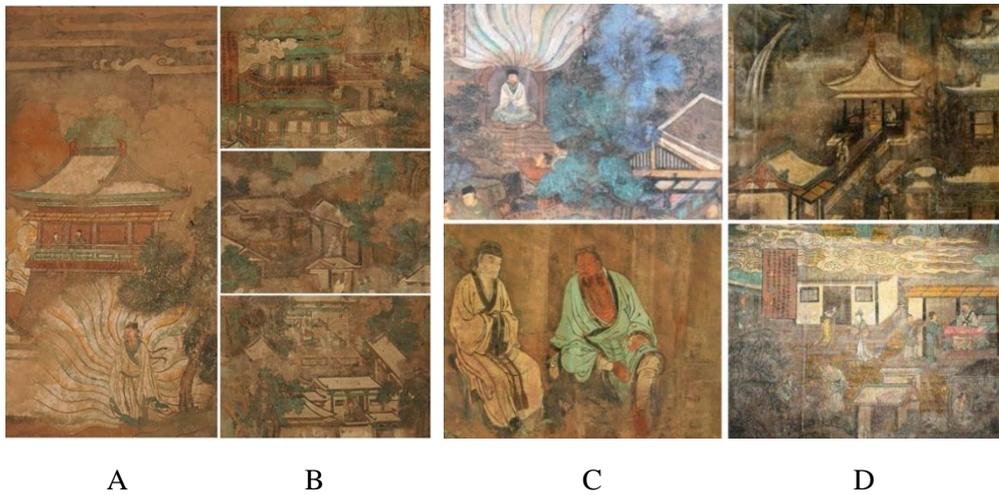


Figure 13 The Yongle Palace murals depicting Yuan Dynasty stories

A and B are murals of celestial palaces
 C and D are murals of allusions

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

3. The IP marketing strategy of Yongle Palace

Extraction of yongle Palace IP elements

In the meticulous study of the murals of Yongle Palace, the authors have distilled eight representative colors, collectively termed as the “Yongle Eight Colors.” These were selected from the overall color palette and the details of the murals, such as garments, headpieces, and skin tones, reflecting the unique aesthetic characteristics

of the Yongle Palace murals. These eight colors—azurite, ochre, orpiment, ash white, cinnabar, blue-green, dark brown, and purplish red—not only highlight the distinctive artistry of Yongle Palace but are also highly suitable for the design of cultural creative products and cultural dissemination, showcasing the chromatic allure of the Yongle Palace murals to the world.

Table 3 Extraction of elements from the Yongle Palace: Color definition

CMYK Values	C80 M35 Y30 K0	C50 M75 Y90 K20	C20 M45 Y80 K0	C5 M5 Y5 K0
	Azurite	Ochre	Orpiment	Ash White
Color Example				
CMYK Values	C40 M95 Y100 K10	C65 M10 Y40 K0	C40 M85 Y90 K40	C50 M85 Y55 K5
	Cinnabar	Blue-Green	Dark Brown	Purplish Red
Color Example				

In the mural art of Yongle Palace, the ancient auspicious beasts, symbols of good fortune and prosperity, with their rich cultural meanings and mythological stories, add profound cultural dimensions to the paintings. Each creature, from the nobility of the dragon, the might of the tiger, to the purity of the crane, carries its unique cultural symbolism and lore. Moreover, the Taoist totem elements contained within the Yongle Palace’s frescoes, such as the elegant brocade patterns, vivid dragon-cloud motifs, harmonious spiral flowers, and patterns of lotus, peony, treasure flowers, life-like blooms, sea pomegranates, square victories, scroll grass,

and ruyi heads, not only manifest the essence of Taoist culture and art but also represent the outstanding achievements of ancient mural painting. These elements of auspicious beasts and totems, with their profound cultural value and unique artistic charm, are exceedingly suitable for transformation into IP, applied in cultural and creative product and scenario designs. For this reason, the author has carefully selected elements like dragons, tigers, cranes, brocade patterns, dragon-cloud motifs, and spiral flowers that not only carry on the unique characteristics of Yongle Palace murals but will also bring endless inspiration and creativity to modern design.



Figure 14 Extraction of Elements from the Yongle Palace: Auspicious Creatures and Totems

A is a set of six icons: dragon, tiger, crane, brocade pattern, cloud-dragon pattern, and spiral flower.

B is the background with the cloud-dragon pattern.

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)



Figure 15 Extraction of Elements from the Yongle Palace: Azure Dragon and White Tiger

A is the Azure Dragon and White Tiger from the Yongle Palace murals

B is the authors’ sketches of them

C is the Spring Festival couplets created by the authors

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

User portrait and key tags of the Yongle Palace

Table 4 User Portrait of the Yongle Palace

Gender	Male 38.3%	Female 61.7%	Keywords	Artistic youth	Taoist health	National trends	Living in the present
Ages	20- 5.3%	20-25 10.5%	25-30 18.6%	30-35 24.5%	35-40 21.3%	40-50 12.4%	50+ 7.4%

Table 5 Key tags of the Yongle Palace

No.	Type	Tag	Priority
1	Overview	One of the three unique national treasures of Shanxi	High
2		One of the first batch of national key cultural relics protection units	Middle
3		World Cultural Heritage Tentative List	Middle
4		One of the three ancestral halls of Taoism	High
5		The largest existing Yuan Dynasty Taoist temple in China	Middle
6		Ludongbin Ancestral Temple	Middle
7		The core artistic stage of the Yuan Dynasty royal family	Middle
8	Architecture	There are currently five official institutions of the Yuan Dynasty in the country, and Yongle Palace accounts for four.	Middle
9		Building relocation, a miracle of architectural history	Low
10		World-class cultural benchmark	High
11	Mural	Representative of the highest painting skills of the Yuan Dynasty	Middle
12		The temple mural is a work of carrying a tripod	High
13		China has the most characters	Middle
14		Maximum single area	Low
14		The most complete preserved mural art palace	High
16		Ancient Chinese religious murals comparable to Dunhuang	High
17		Teaching practice bases for major art schools in China	Middle
18		Education	Shanxi Province Provincial Primary and Secondary Education Practice Base

The murals of the Yongle Palace depict over 300 deities, categorized into three groups: the Supreme Deities of the Morning Assembly, the Civil and Military Officials, and the Jade Maidens. The eight major deities are central to Taoism, such as the Jade Emperor, Empress Earth, and the Eastern and Western Mothers. Popular “traffic-bringing deities” include the Thunder God and Wen Chang, who are deeply cherished. “Peach Blossom Girls” like the Goddess of Lightning and the Purple Light are particularly popular among female figures. Other divine officers, such as the Sun and Moon Gods and the Three Stars, are grouped by their attributes. In the realm of cultural creative product design and IP dissemination, these divine images can be cleverly utilized according to

different scenarios and needs. For instance, the image of Confucius is highly suitable for student stationery, while the God of Wealth and the eight major deities are intimately related to traditional Chinese festivals like the Spring Festival. Specifically, the author has extracted elements of the Azure Dragon and White Tiger, which are very fitting for integration into everyday life, such as protective charms for households. Other divine images can also be converted into line drawings or chibi versions, becoming a part of cultural dissemination and creative products.

In the marketing and cross-industry collaborations of the Yongle Palace IP, it is also necessary to consider the audience of these commercial activities and whether

they overlap with the main consumer group of the Yongle Palace cultural creative products, thereby achieving better promotion and marketing effects. For example, the interview tables of the Yongle Palace show that 60% of the group members are female, and nearly 50% of the group’s age range is between 25-35 years. Therefore, if the target audience of an event or product is also the young female demographic, it would be highly appropriate for precise delivery using the Yongle Palace cultural and educational IP. The authors of this article have compiled the special audience characteristics of the Yongle Palace, as seen in Table 4. Subsequent commercial collaborations involving the Yongle Palace IP can refer to the user profile of the Yongle Palace audience to pre-estimate the likelihood of a successful partnership or commercial conversion rates.

After the establishment of the Yongle Palace’s cultural and educational IP, it is necessary to use the

palace’s key tags for promotion. Hence, the authors have also organized a list of key tags such as “ancient”, “mystic”, “colorful”, “auspicious”, “prosperous”, “serene,” “cultural,” “artistic”, and “historic”, which will be used for marketing. These tags are crucial for the accurate placement and promotion of products, allowing consumers to associate the Yongle Palace with specific cultural and aesthetic experiences. They also play an essential role in the branding and market positioning of the Yongle Palace’s cultural creative products.

Application of Yongle Palace cultural heritage IP

In the following sections, this paper will provide examples of how the Yongle Palace cultural heritage IP across various aspects such as Clothes, Foods, Gifts, and Shows, which can be utilized for marketing and promotional activities by related companies and industries.



Figure 16 Application of Yongle Palace IP: Costumes (right) in the movie “Creation of The Gods” (left)

A and C are characters from the “Creation of The Gods” movie

B and D are characters from the murals of Yongle Palace

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023).

In the realm of attire, the murals of Yongle Palace showcase a rich diversity of garments. The clothing worn by the celestial beings and the coronets adorning their heads highlight the beauty of the human form’s curves in harmony with nature. The depicted figures have sleeves

and ribbons that seem to sway in the breeze, vivid and lifelike, thus earning the reputation of being as elegant as “a belt fluttering in the wind.” The distinctive wearing of jade pendants and sashes also reflects the ancient style of “wearing coarse cloth while embracing jade”,

highlighting a traditional aesthetic. These elements render the Yongle Palace murals a wellspring of inspiration for modern fashion and movie costume design. For instance, in the movie “Creation of The Gods,” although the characters and settings do not fully reflect the historical facts of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, the costume design strikingly resembles that of the Yongle Palace murals, as referenced in Figure 16. Art Director Tim Yip commented on this, stating, “It is mystical yet realistic; the richness of details and the beauty of elegance can be described as a classic in art”.

In terms of food, the murals of Yongle Palace contain numerous depictions related to ancient banquets, particularly abundant in the stories of Lv Dongbin and

Wang Chongyang, which feature many dining scenes. (Fu, 1957) Hence, the theme of “banquets in the heavenly palace” can be utilized to infuse the concept and elements of the Yongle Palace cultural IP into modern interpretations of Chinese tea ceremonies, liquor presentations, water rituals, New Year goods, and gift boxes. As for gifts, the Yongle Palace murals display a wealth of scenes involving the offering of presents. Consequently, the theme of “blessings from the celestial palace” can be employed to incorporate the concept and elements of the Yongle Palace IP into trendy cultural innovations, cross-brand collaborations within the ‘Xian’ cultural ecosystem, and the creation of thoughtful, meaningful gift varieties.

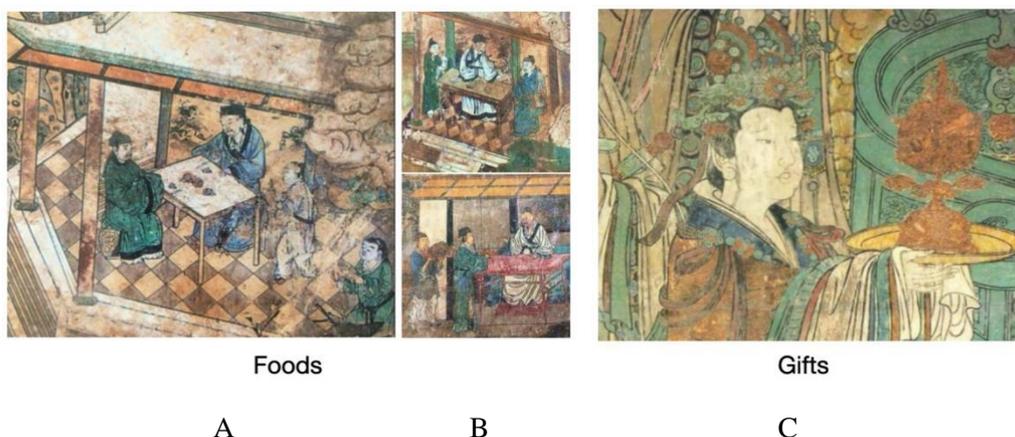


Figure 17 Application of Yongle Palace IP: Foods (Left) and Gifts (Right)

A and B are dining scenes from the Yongle Palace murals

C is a scene of offering gifts from the Yongle Palace murals

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

In terms of food, the murals of Yongle Palace contain numerous depictions related to ancient banquets, particularly abundant in the stories of Lv Dongbin and Wang Chongyang, which feature many dining scenes. Hence, the theme of “banquets in the heavenly palace” can be utilized to infuse the concept and elements of the Yongle Palace cultural IP into modern interpretations of Chinese tea ceremonies, liquor presentations, water rituals, New Year goods, and gift boxes. As for gifts, the Yongle Palace murals display a wealth of scenes involving the offering of presents. Consequently, the theme of “blessings from the celestial palace” can be employed to incorporate the concept and elements of the

Yongle Palace IP into trendy cultural innovations, cross-brand collaborations within the ‘Xian’ ecosystem, and the creation of thoughtful, meaningful gift varieties.

In the realm of Shows, the cultural and educational IP of Yongle Palace offers a variety of themes well-suited for exhibitions, games, films, and art festivals, designed to enhance the IP’s influence through dissemination. For instance, Yongle Palace houses hundreds of historical relics that span millennia, which can be showcased in a variety of exhibitions. These include architectural components, sculpted steles, colored sculptures, paper documents, rubbings, and archives, narrating comprehensive stories of Yongle Palace’s architecture,

murals, Taoist culture, and its relocation. There are already similar exhibitions, as seen in Figure 18. This paper suggests that such exhibitions could be expanded

nationally and held as touring exhibitions in cities across China.

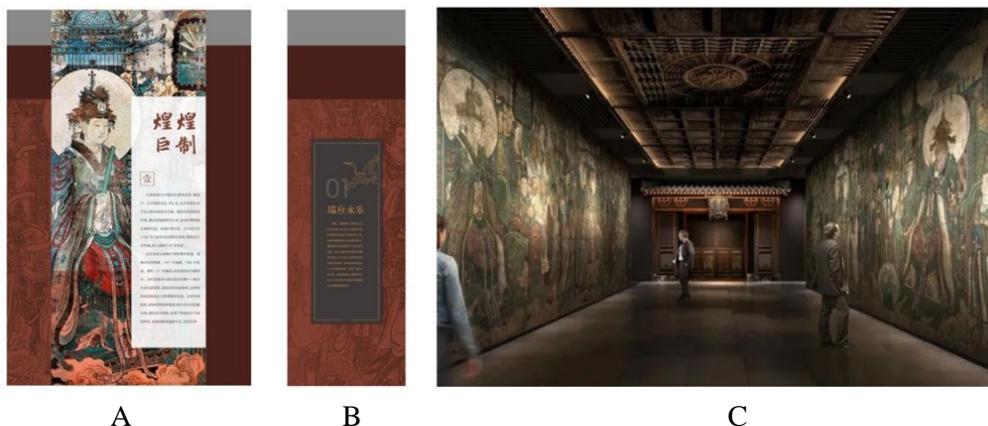


Figure 18 Murals of Celestial Palaces (left) and Allusions (right) in Yongle Palace

A is a book on the Yongle Palace exhibition, B is its roll-up poster, and C is its 3D scene.

Source: Chen and Ruangchewin (2023)

Suggestion

Yongle Palace offers a wide range of cultural and creative products, though their sales performance has been underwhelming. This is largely due to the transportation challenges to the site. For instance, traveling from Beijing to Yongle Palace entails flying to Xi'an-the nearest major city-followed by a one-and-a-half-hour train ride to Yuncheng in Shanxi Province, and then a further two-hour bus journey. Consequently, the majority of visitors to Yongle Palace are from within Shanxi Province, with few visitors from outside the province. Despite this, the murals of Yongle Palace are exceptionally famous and serve as a teaching and internship base for major art colleges across China, as well as an educational practice base for provincial middle and high schools in Shanxi Province, exerting significant influence on art students nationwide.

Therefore, this paper argues that, in comparison to the design and development of cultural and creative products within the scenic area and museum, the cultural and educational IP of Yongle Palace is more aptly suited for commercial collaborations, especially interdisciplinary partnerships. This approach not only overcomes transportation limitations but also harnesses internet traffic to broaden its influence both nationally and internationally.

Conclusion

This study explores the development and marketization of intellectual property (IP) related to the Yongle Palace, a crucial yet under-recognized cultural site within Chinese traditional culture. While Yongle Palace holds immense historical and artistic value, its market visibility lags behind other iconic landmarks such as the Forbidden City and Dunhuang. The research addresses this gap by first examining the murals and architecture of Yongle Palace, which serve as the core elements of its potential cultural IP. By analyzing the historical, artistic, and socio-cultural significance of these elements, this paper aims to create a comprehensive strategy for transforming them into recognized cultural assets.

Additionally, this research investigates practical strategies for promoting and marketizing the Yongle Palace IP. This includes creating a robust marketing plan that spans clothing, food, accommodation, travel, and entertainment. These recommendations are designed to enhance the influence and market value of Yongle Palace's cultural IP, ultimately providing a pathway for its greater recognition and commercial success in the global cultural industry.

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