

# Guidelines Of Cultural And Creative Product Design From Chinese Jiujiang Culture Dimensions

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to explore the dimensions of Chinese Jiujiang culture to offer guidelines for the design of cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum. The researcher adopted the qualitative analysis research method, started by looking up materials, literature, and relevant theories, and then took a descriptive analysis research approach to analyze and summarize data for the next step of the study.

Results have shown that by adopting lotus culture in the design of cultural and creative products for Jiujiang Museum, the history, culture, regional characteristics, and humanistic spirit of Jiujiang City can be reflected. The design of the products originates from the lotus motif of two bronze mirrors of the Song Dynasty in the Jiujiang Museum. In designing the pattern and shape of the products, the researcher has adopted the "Flat Design Style" to offer clearer identifications of the product information. The researcher believes that the lotus culture of Jiujiang City, which incorporates wisdom, tradition, culture, and faith, can supply more cultural added value to the cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum and enhance public cultural awareness and cultural emotions towards Jiujiang City. The researcher has chosen highly practical product carriers, together with product materials and processing techniques that are easy to produce and process to reduce production costs and sales prices, match the price tolerance of target consumers and satisfy the financial capabilities of Jiujiang Museum in production.

**Keywords:** Jiujiang Museum; Cultural and Creative Products; Museum Cultural Resources.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Chinese government has issued cultural policies to encourage and support the development and design of museum cultural and creative products. On top of that, the economic benefits, and social impacts in this field of museums such as the Palace Museum and the National Museum of China have all led to a boom in the development of museum cultural and creative products. As a result, an increasing number of museums started to develop cultural and creative products to enhance the momentum of cultural transmission and improve their sustainability. However, although the design and development of museum cultural and creative products have become a social hotspot, the current

degree of development is far from satisfactory given the huge number of museums in China, the rich cultural resources of collections, and the huge cultural consumption demand of the people. By the end of 2019, there were 5,132 museums in China, of which 1,819 were local museums (Ministry of Culture and Tourism the people's republic of China, 2020). As an important component of China's museums, local museums should be the main army for conducting the development and design of cultural and creative products. However, concerning the current situation, the design capability of cultural and creative products of such museums is generally weak, showing terrible blindness and subjectivity in design and development, which fails to meet people's demand in cultural consumption and by no means help museums to better fulfilled their social

responsibilities in cultural education, cultural communication, and cultural inheritance. Therefore, it is of high research value to improve the design and development level of cultural creative products in local museums.

Taking the design and development of cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum as the objective of research and practice, this study hopes to provide effective suggestions and references for local museums to improve the design and development of cultural and creative products and achieve the following three benefits: 1) Meet people's demand in cultural consumption thus helping museums of such type to increase their economic income; 2) Strengthen impetus for the transmission of museum cultural resources and help such museums to better fulfilled their cultural and educational responsibilities; 3) Enhance the popularity and social influence of such museums, to further enhance public cultural cognitions and cultural emotions towards the region where the museum is located.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Discover Chinese Jiujiang culture dimensions to offer guidelines for cultural and creative product design.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

With China's ongoing development in economy and cultural construction, the socio-cultural field has witnessed a series of new development trends, which served as driving forces for the emergence of three major trends in the museum industry and provided the impetus for the industrial operations of museums and museum engagement in the design and development of cultural and creative products. 1) Under the influence of the New Museology, the core functions and social responsibilities of museums have changed dramatically. An increasing number of museums have begun to develop and promote cultural and creative products to strengthen their connections with society and promote the effective fulfillment of their functions. 2) The development of the cultural and creative industry has driven the prosperity of cultural consumption so that more museums no longer wish to be limited by merely existing as a storeroom and institute of cultural resources. Instead, they integrate their unique cultural resources with cultural and creative industries and upgrade themselves to become cultural consumption producers and leaders of the cultural and creative industry through the design and development of cultural and creative products. 3) The economic pressure caused by insufficient government

financial support and rising operating costs have forced museums to develop sources of funding and increase their operating income through the operation and sales of cultural and creative products to maintain healthy development. Therefore, active development in cultural and creative products can enhance the social attention and influence of museums, help them better perform their social functions such as cultural education, cultural transmission, and cultural inheritance, and promote the development of museums in the field of the cultural and creative industry.

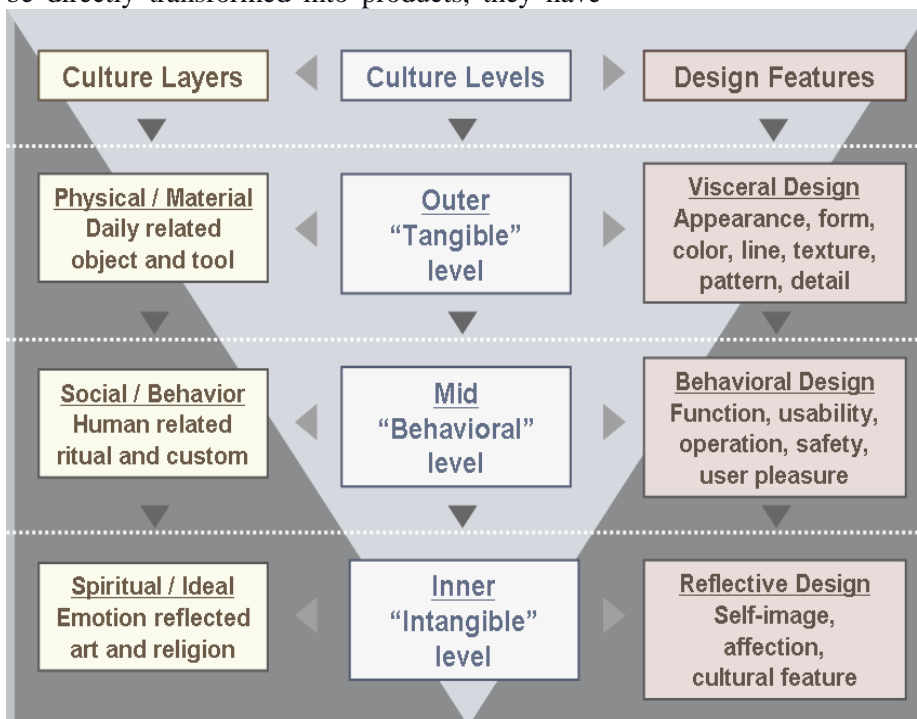
Jiujiang Museum, located in Jiujiang City, Jiangxi Province, is a large local museum. A local museum in China is a type of museum with two main characteristics of both "locality" and "comprehensiveness" (Shen Yanbing, 1951): 1) The "locality" feature is mainly demonstrated in 2 aspects: Firstly, this type of museum is invested, supervised, and managed by local cultural heritage administration; Secondly, unlike national museums, local museums have the special function of "showcasing local image and promoting a local culture". Therefore, cultural resources displayed in local museums need to reflect the cultural characteristics of the located region. 2) The feature of "comprehensiveness" refers to the distinctiveness of such museums, which is different from historical, art, natural science museums, or any other types of museums. Local museums should provide a comprehensive and systematic presentation of the natural, historical, cultural, political, economic, artistic, religious, customary, and other cultural resources of the located region. Today, Jiujiang Museum, as a central platform for displaying cultural resources of the Jiujiang region, has become an important window for promoting Jiujiang's cultural image. Therefore, designing quality cultural and creative products for Jiujiang Museum will help raise social attention to Jiujiang Museum, attract people's interest in visiting, and strengthen people's cultural sentiments towards Jiujiang City, to promote the transmission of Jiujiang cultural image and boost cultural tourism economy of Jiujiang City.

Museum cultural and creative products are tangible products developed through creative design using museum cultural resources. Based on the definition of a museum from the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the clear statement of the "attribute" of museum cultural resources refers to the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes (ICOM, 2007). Combining this "attribute" with the "locality" and "comprehensiveness" of Jiujiang Museum, it is

believed that there are mainly two types of cultural resources in Jiujiang Museum: 1) Resources in physical forms, which are mainly sculptures, costumes, artifacts, handicrafts, artworks, natural specimens, and other collections collected and displayed in Jiujiang Museum. The physical resources can be designed, transformed, and incorporated into the museum's cultural and creative products. 2) Resources in non-material forms, which are mainly historical and cultural information relating to the Jiujiang region and cultural resources such as religious beliefs, ritual systems, folk customs, craftsmanship, and techniques contained in the collections of Jiujiang Museum. Although such forms of resources cannot be directly transformed into products, they have

infiltrated into people's daily behavior, aesthetic consciousness, and values, and therefore have important influences on the design of museum cultural and creative products.

In designing cultural and creative products for Jiujiang Museum, the researcher referred to the "Cultural Product Design Framework" theory proposed by Xu Qixian (2004) and Lin Rongtai (2007) as follows: 1) The outer level consists mainly of visual elements such as color, shape and surface decoration. 2) The mid-level mainly focuses on functionality and user experience. 3) The inner level is mainly cultural connotations and emotional experiences.



**Figure 1:** Cultural Product Design Framework

**Source:** Rung-Tai Lin (2007, PP46)

Culture holds the key to the core value of museum cultural and creative products, which is required to feature cultural perception and identification. Therefore, the analysis of cultural levels helps researchers to clarify information related to the cultural resources of Jiujiang Museum, and find the converging interests between the cultural characteristics of Jiujiang City and the cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum, so that the connotation and meaning of products can be conveyed through the appearances, functions, and application methods.

## METHOD

In this study, a combination of qualitative analysis (QA) and descriptive analysis (DA) was adopted by the researcher in the following steps:

1. Three aspects were analyzed through literature investigation and literature review: 1) the driving factors of museums in designing and developing cultural and creative products; 2) the nature, functions, and responsibilities of the Jiujiang Museum, and its cultural resource types; 3) the features of lotus motif in the bronze mirror with lotus pattern of the Song dynasty in Jiujiang Museum collections and the relationship between lotus and the history and culture of Jiujiang City.
2. By adopting a structured interview outline, the researcher has conducted in-depth interviews with two deputy directors of Jiujiang Museum to acquire the purpose and design demands of

cultural and creative product development of Jiujiang Museum.

3. In Jiujiang Museum, the researcher adopted a structured questionnaire to survey 100 visitors and then statistically analyzed the data by calculating the mean and the standard deviation to obtain a picture of how visitors rated the design proposals.
4. In form of a group interview, the researcher carried out a structured interview outline to talk with 2 deputy directors and 4 design professionals of Jiujiang Museum who have



**Figure 2:** Bronze mirrors with lotus patterns in Song Dynasty

(Collection of Jiujiang Museum)

**Source:** <http://www.jjmuseum.cn/lib/Index.html>

1. The outer level: The lotus decoration on the back of two bronze mirrors draws on the painting style of “Xiao Pin” of literati of the Song dynasty, and borrowed from the composition of “Zhe Zhi”, carving a rather realistic pattern of lotus flower, lotus seedpod, and lotus leave in bas relief and forming a pictorial image on a mirror surface. This type of decoration, which incorporates the poetic sentiments of the literati into the surface of objects, has been popular ever since the Song dynasty.
2. The mid-level: The bronze mirror is an article of daily use for ancient people to tidy up their appearances and is prominent in functionality. Although bronze mirrors have disappeared from people’s daily lives with the advent of glass mirrors, researchers can still use the function of bronze mirrors in product design or use the shape and ornamental elements of bronze mirrors in product design, so that they can be integrated into people’s daily lives, thus strengthening the relevance of consumers to Jiujiang Museum.
3. The inner level: Lotus is one of the earliest floral motifs of China used for decorative purposes and is widely loved for its various cultural connotations and auspicious meanings. Because

more than 10 years of experience in design research and design practice to obtain information on their evaluations of the design proposals.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher has chosen two bronze mirrors with lotus patterns of the Song Dynasty as product design prototypes from the most attractive artifacts in Jiujiang Museum, and analyzed them from three levels according to the theory of “cultural product design framework”.





lotus grows in the mud and yet remains clean and elegant, it is particularly revered by the literati in China as a symbol of a gentleman’s virtue and cultivation. What’s more, the lotus is the city flower of Jiujiang and has a deep historical connection with the city: 1) Jiujiang is a city with numerous lakes and a long history of lotus cultivation. It has been customary to enjoy lotus since ancient times, and there are many tourist attractions and landmarks named after lotus. 2) Zhou Dunyi, the famous literary scholar, philosopher, and educator of the Northern Song Dynasty wrote: “The Theory of Loving Lotus” in Jiujiang City, praising the lotus for its steadfast and noble character. This article has been highly valued by the Chinese literary and educational circles all along and is one of the most familiar ancient prose to Chinese people. Therefore, the lotus has become a symbolic icon of the human spirit of Jiujiang City.

## Cultural and Creative Product Design for Jiujiang Museum

The researcher extracted the lotus motif from the two bronze mirrors with the lotus pattern of the Song dynasty and used the popular “Flat Design Style” to depict the lotus motif in simple lines and blocks of color, and then applied it to the design of mirrors, combs, bookmarks, and badges.



**Table 1:** Cultural and Creative Product Design for Jiujiang Museum

No.	Product	Product pictures	Product materials	Product process
1	Mirror		Glass and brass (zinc alloy)	The mirror is made in an enamel imitation process with electroplated edges.
2	Comb		Brass (zinc alloy)	The comb is made in an enamel imitation process with electroplated edges.
3	Bookmark		PMMA (Acrylic Plastics)	Silk screen printing
4	Badge		PMMA (Acrylic Plastics)	Silk screen printing

From Table 1, we can notice from the cultural and creative product design of Jiujiang Museum that the product types are mirrors, combs, bookmarks, and badges. The product materials are Glass and brass (zinc alloy), Brass (zinc alloy), PMMA (Acrylic Plastics), and PMMA (Acrylic Plastics). The mirror patterns are made in the enamel

imitation process and the edges are done with an electroplating process. The comb patterns are made in the enamel imitation process and the edges are done with the electroplating process. The bookmarks and rulers used the screen printing process.

**Table 2:** Finding the relationship between cultural and creative products for Jiujiang Museum

No.	Product	The relationship between cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum					
		Wisdom	Tradition	Culture	Faith	Relationship	Product highlights and uses
1	Mirror	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 aspects: wisdom, tradition, culture, faith	In terms of connotation and symbolism, the ancient Chinese believed that by looking in the mirror, people could tidy up their clothes and look inside oneself, and therefore the mirror has the symbolic function of “self-respect”, “self-reflection” and “self-inspection”. By combining the lotus motif with the mirror, the researcher can make a connection between morality and the cultivation of a gentleman when using the product, thus allowing people to “reflect” on their behavior.
2	Comb	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 aspects: wisdom,	The researcher has preserved the shape and pattern of the bronze mirror and

No.	Product	The relationship between cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum					
		Wisdom	Tradition	Culture	Faith	Relationship	Product highlights and uses
						tradition, culture, faith	designed a product with a combination of comb and comb box, which has added a new function to the museum artifacts. In terms of connotation, the ancient Chinese believed that using a comb to groom one's hair would make one's appearance neat and that using a "comb" to comb on one's behavior and inner self from time to time would regulate manners and improve moral cultivation. Thus, the researcher combined the lotus motif with the design of the comb, meaning combining the pure and elegant symbolism of the lotus with the symbolic function of the comb.
3	Bookmark	✓	✓	✓	✓	4 aspects: wisdom, tradition, culture, faith	Early in the Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Periods, the ancient Chinese put animal teeth and bones in bamboo slips to mark their reading progress. Since then, bookmarks have been an important reading tool for Chinese literati, and today they are still frequently used tools for paper book lovers. The researcher, therefore, applied the lotus motif to the bookmark design, aiming to let the cultural message of Jiujiang City and Jiujiang Museum accompany users in their reading progress so that users would get influenced by the noble character of the lotus via using the bookmark.
4	Badge	✓		✓	✓	3 aspects: wisdom, culture, faith	The badge has the functions of expressing cultural beliefs, demonstrating individuality, commemorating, and decorating. The researcher applied the lotus motif to the design of badges, and people wear badges as decorations or souvenirs on their clothes, hats, and backpacks. This would be a recall of their travel and visiting experiences in Jiujiang City and Jiujiang Museum from time to time, and a way of expressing their life value pursuit by taking the noble character of lotus as their cultural faith.

From Table 2, the survey findings have indicated that the relationship between cultural and creative products for Jiujiang City Museum in cultural dimensions are different as follows: 1) The mirror is associated with 4 aspects including wisdom,

tradition, culture, and faith. The mirror has the symbolic function of "self-respect", "self-reflection" and "self-inspection". The researcher has combined the lotus motif with the mirror so that when people use the product, they can associate

morality with the cultivation of gentlemen and thus “introspect” on their behavior. 2) The comb is related to 4 aspects namely wisdom, tradition, culture, and faith. The ancient Chinese believed that grooming hair with a comb would make one look clean and tidy, and a “comb” can be used to regulate manners and improve moral cultivation. The researcher combined the lotus motif with comb design, meaning pure and elegant symbolism of the lotus combined with symbolic functions of the comb. 3) The bookmarks relate to 4 aspects, which are wisdom, tradition, culture, and faith. A bookmark is a tool often used by paper book lovers, therefore, the researcher applied the lotus motif to the design of the bookmark aiming to let

the cultural message of Jiujiang City and Jiujiang Museum accompany users’ reading process, so that consumers can be influenced by the noble character of lotus while using the bookmark. 4) The emblem is associated with 3 aspects, wisdom, culture, and faith, and has the function of expressing cultural beliefs, displaying individuality, commemorating, and decorating. The researcher applied the lotus motif to badge design. People wear these badges as decorations or souvenirs on clothes, hats, and backpacks so that they can often recall their travel and visiting experience in Jiujiang City and Jiujiang Museum and express their life value pursuit by taking the noble character of lotus as their cultural faith.

## CONCLUSIONS



**Figure 3:** Cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum

**Source:** Self drawn by researcher

Jiujiang Museum is an important window for promoting the cultural image and spiritual outlook of Jiujiang City. The researcher has adopted the lotus culture of Jiujiang to design cultural and creative products for the Jiujiang Museum. 1) In the outer level of the products, the researcher has adopted the lotus pattern from the bronze mirror of the Song Dynasty from Jiujiang Museum, to convey the image characteristics of cultural relics collections of Jiujiang Museum clearly and quickly and bestow “commemorative” features to the products. 2) In terms of product functions, the researcher has taken mirrors, combs, badges, and bookmarks as product carriers. These four products are frequently used in people’s daily life, which can strengthen the correlation between cultural resources and consumers of Jiujiang Museum. In

addition, the frequent use of the products in consumers’ daily life can enhance the “public visibility” of products, thus expanding the transmission channels and enhancing the transmission intensity of cultural information of Jiujiang Museum. 3) In terms of the cultural connotation of the products, the lotus symbolizes the virtue and cultivation of gentlemen and has been an ornamental flower and decorative motif favored by Chinese literati down the ages. Besides, as the city flower of Jiujiang, the lotus can reflect the historical culture and humanistic spirit of Jiujiang City in terms of wisdom, tradition, culture, and faith. The cultural connotation that lotus conveys is highly identifiable that an effective information communication channel could be established between the social public and the cultural resources showcased by Jiujiang Museum,

and meanwhile strike empathetic mentalities. Consequently, it can help enhance public cultural cognition and cultural emotion towards Jiujiang City, strengthen cultural information transmission and cultural brand building of Jiujiang Museum, enabling the cultural and creative products of Jiujiang Museum to become the media of demonstrating Jiujiang image and promoting Jiujiang history and culture to the public.

In the design of product patterns and shapes, 1) The researcher has adopted the “Flat Design Style” according to the aesthetic preference of young consumers, meaning the researcher uses simple lines and color blocks to describe the outline of these design elements, and then apply them to the pattern design and modeling design of the products so that the products present a flat design styling effect. This design style removes complex decorative effects, enables clearer and faster product information identification, and makes it easier for people to remember and obtain sensations of the cultural resources of Jiujiang Museum. 2) The product carriers selected by the researcher are all frequently used items in the daily life of target consumer groups, which carry strong practicability. Besides, the small size of the products makes them more portable for tourists which also can enhance people’s purchase willingness. 3) Considering the production capability of Jiujiang Museum and the price tolerance of target consumers, the researcher has chosen product carriers that are easy to mass-produce, as well as materials and techniques with low production costs, to reduce the production cost and selling price of the products.

When designing cultural and creative products for local museums, a designer needs to extract and integrate the museum collection resources and characteristic cultural resources of the local region. Focuses must be paid not only to the visual effect and user experience of the products such as shape, pattern, color, material, and function, but also to the transmission of cultural spirit, cultural connotation, and cultural image. This requires the designer to give full play to divergent thinking, associative thinking, and creative thinking, follow relevant design principles and use effective design methods to realize the design transformation and information transmission of museum cultural resources, meet the cultural consumption demands of the people and achieve the purpose of design and development of museum cultural and creative products. In the designing process, a designer needs to stick to four principles as follows:

1. “Demand analysis” is an important stage in bridging the cognitive gaps among the designer, museum, and consumer. As different consumer groups differ in terms of gender, age, cultural background, knowledge level, aesthetic experience, etc., and different types of museums differ in terms of attributes, responsibilities, and visitors, designers need to conduct relevant research to understand the design expectations and needs of museums and target consumers for cultural and creative products to avoid blindness and subjectivity in design work.
2. A designer needs to conduct in-depth mining, analysis, and interpretation of the museum's cultural resources information, to avoid deficiency of cultural connotations in product design, and misuse and abuse of cultural elements. In the meantime, museum experts in cultural relics can be invited to participate to ensure the adequacy and accuracy of information obtained.
3. To avoid difficulties or cognitive discrepancy in the recognition and understanding of product semantics, a designer can invite target consumers to participate in the selection, extraction, and transformation of elements to ensure the effective and accurate transmission of cultural information about products.
4. In the product designing process, a designer should strike a balance and handle the scale between “creativity” and “culture”, which means a designer should not ignore consumers’ understanding and cognitive level for the purpose of emphasizing “culture”, and making uninteresting and obscuring product that deviates from people’s daily life. Also, designers should not abuse cultural elements to highlight “creativity”, resulting in vague or even perverted cultural characteristics. Designers shall not distort history and culture with “vulgar” and “pulp” entertainment products only for the interests of the capital market.

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