

# A Study on the Aesthetic and Economic Transformation of Mount Tai folk culture

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**Abstract:** The folk culture of Mount Tai carries profound national spirit and unique aesthetic implication, and its contemporary transformation is of great significance to the protection of cultural heritage and the development of regional economy. This paper focuses on the core role of art design in the transformation of folk culture, and discusses the interactive mechanism between aesthetics and economy. A three-tiered steering model driven by art design is constructed. The model can effectively realize the creative transformation of Mount Tai folk culture from aesthetic resources to aesthetic capital through the contemporary translation of visual symbols at the basic layer, the immersion construction of cultural narrative at the experience layer, and the shaping of brand IP system at the industrial layer. This transformation not only enhances the competitiveness of the regional cultural industry, but also provides a new path for the living inheritance of folk culture, and provides a valuable reference for practical innovation in related fields.

**Keywords:** Mount Tai folk culture; aesthetics; economic transformation; art design; cultural and creative industries

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## 1. Introduction

As a world cultural and natural heritage site recognized by UNESCO, Mount Tai has a profound and diverse cultural accumulation. In the long historical evolution, the folk cultural forms represented by the culture of Fengshan, Bixia Yuanjun belief, and Shi Gandang custom together constitute the unique cultural landscape of Mount Tai. These cultural forms not only have rich historical connotations, but also contain unique aesthetic values. However, with the acceleration of the modernization process today, the living space of traditional folk culture has been squeezed, and its inheritance and development are facing many challenges.

At the same time, the vigorous rise of cultural and creative industries provides new opportunities for the contemporary transformation of traditional folk culture. How to effectively transform the "aesthetic" characteristics of Mount Tai folk culture into "economic" value and realize the benign interaction between cultural protection and industrial development has become a topic worthy of in-depth discussion. As a bridge between tradition and modernity, art design plays an irreplaceable role in this transformation process. From the perspective of art design, this paper discusses the internal logic and practical path of the aesthetic economic turn of Mount Tai folk culture.

## 2. The Aesthetic Core and Visual Representation of Mount Tai folk culture

### 2.1 Diverse Composition and Spiritual Connotation

Mount Tai folk culture is a multi compound cultural system with rich levels and profound connotation. The culture of Fengshan sacrificial ceremony embodies the beauty of "nobility" and "order" at the national level, demonstrating a solemn and sacred aesthetic paradigm with its grand ceremonial nature and strict ritual norms; The belief in Bixia Yuanjun represents the beauty of "benevolence" and "life" at the folk level, embodying the people's beautiful wishes for the reproduction of life and the health of the family; The custom of Shi Gandang, as a beauty of "strength" and "protection" in daily life, is widely present in the streets and alleys of residential buildings; The rich and colorful folk legends and temple fair activities together construct the beauty of "fantasy" and "celebration" at the secular level.

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The spiritual connotation of Mount Tai folk culture is mainly reflected in three aspects: first, the cosmology of "the unity of heaven and man". Activities such as Fengshan sacrificial ceremony in Mount Tai folk culture reflect the harmonious unity of man and nature, man and heaven and earth; The second is the social ideal of "peaceful country and peaceful people". Mount Tai has been a symbol of peaceful country and people since ancient times. All kinds of folk activities are based on people's good vision of national stability and peaceful life; The third is the life attitude of "advocating virtue and using". Mount Tai folk custom not only pays attention to the construction of the spiritual world, but also pays attention to the needs of real life. For example, Bixia Yuanjun belief has both spiritual comfort and care for the actual life needs such as health and fertility.

## 2.2 Analysis of Visual Symbol System

These aesthetic traits are expressed concretely through a vast and unique visual symbol system. On the material carrier level, Mount Tai's stone tablets convey the visual feeling of "loftiness and eternity" with their strength of calligraphy, texture and layout of stone materials; The arch of wooden architecture color paintings, metal components and statue modeling in the Dai Temple, Bixia Temple and other ancient buildings reflect the "solemn and exquisite" craft aesthetics; Folk artifacts such as peach wood swords and prayer ribbons reflect the aesthetic taste of folk life in a "simple and auspicious" visual form. At the level of behavioral rituals, the parade procession, costumes, and props in the Dongyue Temple Fair form a "flowing and celebratory" visual picture; The specific actions, scenes, and atmosphere during the blessing ceremony create a "sacred, immersive" visual theater.

## 2.3 The Need for Contemporary Aesthetic Transformation

However, in today's society where the context and aesthetic concepts have undergone profound changes, this traditional visual symbol system faces an urgent need for contemporary transformation and re-creation. The core challenge lies in how to achieve the modern translation of visual language while maintaining cultural authenticity, and to construct a systematic contemporary visual narrative. Against this backdrop, art and design have become a crucial bridge connecting tradition and modernity, and realizing the economic transformation of aesthetic value.

## 3.A Three-Tier Path Model for Art and Design Driving the Economic Transformation of Aesthetics

To achieve the effective transformation of Mount Tai folk culture from aesthetic resources to economic capital, this study constructs a three-tier transformation model driven by art and design. This model encompasses the foundational layer, the experiential layer, and the industrial layer, forming a complete transformation path.

### 3.1 Foundational Layer: Contemporary Translation and Reconstruction Design of Visual Symbols

This layer aims to address the issues of "contemporary recognizability" and "aesthetic adaptability" of cultural resources. Its core is the extraction and re-creation of traditional visual elements. Specific methods include:

**Systematic Refinement of Fonts and Colors:** For example, a "Mount Tai Stone Carving Font" can be developed, integrating the essence of stele calligraphy into modern font design; defining "Mount Tai Color Spectrum" (such as "Tianzhufeng Green", "Sunrise at the Summit of Mount Tai Gold", "Peach Blossom Valley Pink", etc.) to construct a color system with regional recognition.

**Modern Reconstruction of Graphics and Patterns:** Taking "Shi Gandang" as an example, it can be transformed from a simple stone carving symbol into an IP image with affinity and a sense of the times through design techniques such as simplification and abstraction, exaggeration of features, and emotional injection. Similarly, traditional patterns in Mount Tai folk culture can be modularized and geometrically processed so that they can be flexibly applied to modern design carriers.

### 3.2 Experience Layer: Immersive Cultural Narrative and Experience Design

This layer aims to transform static cultural displays into dynamic and participatory cultural experiences, meeting

the deep needs of consumers in the experience economy era for personalization and participation.

**Thematic Visual Wayfinding and Public Art:** Design thematic wayfinding systems such as "The Road to Blessing Mount Tai", combining mountain climbing routes with blessing narratives, and setting up public art installations themed around folk customs at key nodes, making the entire space a perceptible and interactive cultural field.

**Digital Interaction and Immersive Exhibition:** Utilizing technologies such as AR (Augmented Reality) and VR (Virtual Reality), we will create the "Mysterious Gods of Mount Tai" digital art exhibition, bringing historical figures and mythological scenes to life and creating an immersive experience that transcends time and space for visitors.

**Ritual products and activity design:** design and develop modern "Mount Tai Blessing Gift Box" and other series of products, and support online interactive programs to extend one-time travel behavior into sustainable cultural experience. After the upgrading of the live performance of "Mount Tai·Fengshan Ceremony of China", the grand historical narrative was successfully transformed into an emotional resonance that can be felt by individuals through the introduction of "small stone" narrative from the perspective of civilians and strengthening the interaction between watching and performing (such as throwing steamed Buns symbolizing good fortune to the audience), which greatly enhanced the sense of immersion in the performance and the sense of participation of the audience.

### **3.3 Industry Layer: Systematic Shaping and Derivative Design of Brand IP**

This layer is the final link in realizing the economic value of Mount Tai folk culture. Through systematic brand building and IP derivation, the large-scale transformation from cultural experience to economic value can be achieved. It is necessary to establish a complete industrial chain, form a diversified product system and a sustainable business model.

**Construct a "Mount Tai Folk Customs" brand visual identity system (VIS):** Design a unified brand visual system, including brand logo, standard font, standard colors and auxiliary graphics, as well as usage guidelines in different media and application scenarios, to ensure the consistency and professionalism of the brand image.

**IP-based operation and diversified derivation:** A multi-level IP content system can be constructed. The first is original IP, which is an original IP developed based on the core elements of Mount Tai folk culture, such as "Shi Gandang" and "Bixia Yuanjun"; the second is derivative IP, which is a co-branded product developed through cooperation with other well-known IPs; the third is co-created IP, which is an interactive IP content created through public participation. Based on this, a cultural and creative product system covering high, medium and low end can be built to meet the needs of different consumer levels. Mount Tai shadow puppetry has achieved remarkable results in this regard. Its hundreds of derivative cultural and creative products and co-branded cooperation with popular brands have greatly expanded its audience.

**Development of digital content industry:** actively develop digital content such as cartoons, animations, short videos and games with Mount Tai folk culture as the theme, and use new media platforms to spread it, so as to constantly enrich the digital content ecology of Mount Tai culture and expand industrial boundaries.

## **4. The Pluralistic Value of Mount Tai folk culture's Economic Turn**

The economic turn of Mount Tai folk culture driven by art design has brought significant economic, cultural and social values to Mount Tai area.

### **4.1 Economic Value: Industrial Upgrading and Consumption Enhancement**

**Rising tourism consumption level:** Through the deep integration of cultural experience, Tai'an tourism has successfully transformed from a "ticket economy" to a "comprehensive economy". Data shows that in 2024, Tai'an City received nearly 94.294 million domestic tourists, with a tourism revenue of 90.27 billion yuan. The average stay time of out of town tourists was extended to 2.12 days, effectively transforming "mountain traffic" into "city retention". After the revision of "Mount Tai·Fengshan Ceremony of China", the occupancy rate and net income

increased significantly and strongly promoted the surrounding accommodation, catering and commercial consumption.

**Rise of Cultural and Creative Industry Clusters:** Intangible cultural heritage projects, represented by Mount Tai shadow puppetry, Dawenkou lace, and Mount Tai dough sculpture, have formed a distinctive series of cultural and creative products through design empowerment and industrial development. This has not only created considerable economic benefits but also attracted the younger generation to join the ranks of inheritance and innovation.

**Enhanced Brand Value and Market Competitiveness:** The construction of the Mount Tai folk brand system and high-quality design have significantly enhanced the added value and market competitiveness of Mount Tai cultural and creative products. "Mount Tai Cultural and Creative" is gradually becoming a regional brand with wide influence.

## **4.2 Cultural Value: Revitalization of Tradition and Strengthening of Identity**

**Living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage projects:** Many folk cultures facing inheritance crisis, such as Mount Tai shadow puppetry, Dongyuan Cloisonné and Famille Rose etc., have found a living and development space in contemporary society by integrating modern design and life aesthetics.

**Promotion of cultural identity and self-confidence:** Mount Tai folk culture translated by art design is presented to the public, especially young groups, in a form that is easier to understand and enjoy, effectively enhancing their sense of identity and pride in local culture.

**Diversified development of cultural ecology:** Traditional culture has formed a more open, diverse, and dynamic cultural ecology through the exchange and collision with modern design, digital technology, and foreign cultures.

## **4.3 Social Value: Community Participation and Urban Renewal**

**Community participation and benefit sharing:** Many Mount Tai folk culture transformation projects focus on attracting local community residents to participate, making them the subject and beneficiary of cultural innovation, and realizing a win-win situation of cultural inheritance and livelihood improvement.

**Construction of city image and cultural soft power:** Unique Mount Tai folk cultural products and activities, such as Mount Tai International Mountain Climbing Festival, New Youth Music Festival, have significantly improved the city's cultural image and influence.

**Civic Aesthetic Education and Improvement of Quality of Life:** Integrating folk aesthetic elements into urban public spaces, cultural activities, and daily life subtly enhances residents' aesthetic literacy and quality of life, fosters a positive social and cultural atmosphere, and strengthens people's sense of happiness and fulfillment.

# **5. Conclusion and Outlook**

## **5.1 Research Conclusions**

This study systematically demonstrates the core role of art design in driving the aesthetic and economic transformation of Mount Tai folk culture. The three-layer transformation model constructed by the research provides a clear, systematic, and operable practical path for this transformation process. Practice has proven that this transformation not only brings direct economic benefits but also generates profound and diverse values in terms of cultural inheritance and social development. The key to success lies in the appropriate contemporary translation and innovative industrial construction based on a deep understanding of cultural connotations.

## **5.2 Research Prospects**

Looking to the future, the economic transformation of Mount Tai folk culture can be further explored in the following aspects:

**Deepen technological integration:** Explore the deep integration of cutting-edge technologies such as metaverse and AI-generated content with cultural experiences to create unprecedented ways of cultural presentation and interaction.

Promote community co-construction: Establish a more complete mechanism to encourage local community residents to participate more deeply in cultural innovation and benefit sharing, ensuring the sustainability of living heritage.

Implement sustainable design: Integrate green and environmental protection concepts into the entire process of design, production and consumption, and achieve the unity of cultural, economic and ecological benefits.

In summary, the aesthetic economic transformation of Mount Tai folk culture is a long-term systematic project that requires the joint participation of multiple stakeholders, including the government, enterprises, communities, and designers. Through continuous theoretical exploration and practical innovation, Mount Tai folk culture will surely shine even brighter in the new era, providing valuable "Mount Tai experience" for the contemporary inheritance of the excellent traditional culture of the Chinese nation.

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