

The Triple Aesthetics and Style Formation Logic of Publishing House's Cultural Creativity

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Abstract: With the rapid development of the cultural and creative industries, publishing houses' cultural and creative products have become a key vehicle for cross-industry integration in the publishing sector. The aesthetic design and individual style of these products directly determine their market competitiveness. This paper employs design aesthetics theory as a framework to define three distinct dimensions of publishing houses' cultural and creative products: functional beauty, formal beauty, and cultural beauty. By analyzing typical cases such as Shanghai Translation Publishing House's "Seven Seas Manufacturing Bureau" and People's Literature Publishing House's "Treasures of Humanities," and utilizing sales data from Taobao and category statistics, the study examines the formation logic and presentation characteristics of publishing houses' unique cultural and creative styles. The conclusions provide theoretical support and practical innovation pathways for optimizing publishing houses' cultural and creative designs and enhancing market share.

Keywords: Publishing House Cultural Creativity; Design Aesthetics; Individual Style; Innovation Path

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1. Introduction

The "culture + creativity" industry model continues to evolve, with publishers leveraging their content resources to develop cultural and creative products becoming a key pathway for industry transformation. According to statistical data, among approximately 618 publishers nationwide, only 121 have established Taobao stores for cultural and creative product sales, yet merely 96 of these possess IP design awareness and established distinctive styles. Market design constitutes a relatively independent process of innovation and construction within the realm of aesthetics. These figures highlight the vast potential of the cultural and creative product market while revealing widespread issues such as weak design awareness, lack of aesthetic expression, and homogenized styles among most publishers. In the current era of consumption upgrading, consumer demand for cultural and creative products has shifted from practical tools to aesthetic carriers and emotional anchors. The depth of design aesthetics and the uniqueness of individual styles have become the core determinants of market share.

Current research predominantly focuses on the commercial strategies of publishers' cultural and creative products or IP management approaches, yet lacks comprehensive analysis of design aesthetics and particularly market data-supported studies on aesthetic and stylistic elements. This paper centers on the aesthetic essence and individual style in design, examining the core principles of publishers' cultural and creative product design. Through case studies of publishers like Qihai Manufacturing Bureau, Humanistic Treasure, and Chongwen Publishing House, it utilizes empirical data such as sales figures and review counts to explore the patterns of cultural and creative product design, thereby providing a fresh research perspective for industry development.

2. Aesthetic Connotation of Publishing House's Cultural and Creative Product Design

The design aesthetics of publishers' cultural and creative products transcend mere visual design. They center on publishing content while integrating practical functionality, visual expression, and cultural heritage into a cohesive system. This aesthetic framework comprises three interwoven dimensions: functional beauty, formal beauty, and cultural beauty. These elements collectively form the foundation of the product's aesthetic value, each demonstrating distinct industry-specific characteristics within publishers' cultural and creative offerings.

2.1 Functional Beauty: Adaptation of Practical Attributes to Cultural Contexts

Functional beauty will reclaim its position as the cornerstone of modern design aesthetics. For publishing

cultural and creative products, the essence lies not merely in usability, but in the seamless integration of practical functionality with reading contexts and cultural experiences. The design of such products should expand beyond the core reading scenario while addressing everyday needs. This functional beauty adheres to ergonomic principles while incorporating the distinctive essence of publishing culture, enabling products to convey cultural value through their use.

The product design of Shanghai Yiwén Publishing House's Qihai Manufacturing Bureau epitomizes functional aesthetics. The book covers in the Oriental Archives series (Figure 1) adapt to various book formats, serving dual purposes as protective covers and mobile literary displays. This collection has achieved over 6,300 sales and 1,497 reviews, outperforming Chongwen Bookstore's IP-free notebooks that sold only 2 units with zero reviews — a testament to how context-appropriate functionality drives market success. Qihai's multi-purpose paper (Figure 2), combining notepaper, manuscript paper, and notebook functions, supports diverse uses like reading annotations and daily notes, with each variant surpassing 100 sales. This demonstrates how integrating functional beauty with cultural contexts dramatically enhances product competitiveness.



Figure 1: Book Cover



Figure 2: Universal Paper

2.2 Formal Beauty: Visual Reconstruction of Cultural Symbols

The aesthetic essence manifests through formal beauty. Publishers' cultural and creative products center on cultural symbols within their content, creating distinctive visual languages through innovative reimagining of shapes, colors, and materials. Compared to conventional cultural products, these designs possess inherent advantages. Designers can extract unique symbols from classic books, author imagery, and literary imagery, then reconfigure and combine them using varied stylistic approaches to achieve a harmonious blend of visual appeal and cultural identity.

According to the principles of formal aesthetics, their applications in publishing house cultural creations exhibit distinct differentiation characteristics. The "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" series from People's Literature Publishing House's official cultural store "Humanistic Treasures" extracts classic symbols like the Green Dragon Crescent Blade and Bagua diagrams, combining metallic materials with matte color schemes. Through symmetrical composition designs for stationery items such as paperweights and bookmarks (Figure 3), it presents a solemn visual quality. This series achieved sales exceeding 4,006 units and garnered 1,199+ reviews. Meanwhile, Shanghai Translation Publishing House's "Black Cat Night Club" IP, inspired by the 1881 Parisian Montmartre Black Cat Club, incorporates silhouette elements of black cats and retro musical notation symbols, utilizing color contrast designs and fabric materials (Figure 4) to showcase a literary and trendy visual style. Its derivative products reached sales of 9,077+ units and 1,667+ reviews. Although these two forms of expression differ significantly in style, both enhance market recognition through cultural symbol extraction and visual reconstruction. However, China Map Publishing House's map-themed cultural creations (Figure 5), despite their striking designs, lack core symbol reconstruction and exhibit chaotic forms. The folded globe achieved only 131+ sales, far below similar IP products.



Figure 3 Bookmark of Four Great Classical Novels

Figure 4: "Black Cat Night Concert" Cultural and Creative Products

Figure 5: Cultural and Creative Products of China Map Publishing House

2.3 Cultural Beauty: Inheritance of the Spiritual Core of Publishing Content

As the core aesthetic gene of publishing house cultural and creative products, cultural beauty distinguishes it from other industries' cultural creations. Its essence lies in transforming books' literary value and ideological depth into tangible aesthetic forms, achieving concrete transmission of cultural spirit. The cultural beauty of publishing house cultural and creative products represents a profound interpretation of published content, not mere accumulation of cultural symbols. It requires distilling the core spiritual essence and converting it through design into the emotional and spiritual attributes of products, enabling consumers to experience cultural resonance during use.

The market premium potential of products is directly determined by the depth of cultural aesthetic expression. On December 14, 2021, President Xi Jinping emphasized in his speech the need to explore the ideological concepts, humanistic spirit, and moral norms of China's excellent traditional culture, integrating artistic creativity with Chinese cultural values and combining Chinese aesthetic principles with contemporary aesthetic pursuits to revitalize the vitality of Chinese culture. Unlike the Fanwu Publishing House's canvas bags printed with only floral and bird patterns (Figure 6), which lack profound cultural exploration, the Lu Xun-themed cultural and creative products from Humanistic Treasure go beyond limited designs featuring Lu Xun's portraits or quotes. Instead, they distill his critical spirit and humanistic care, creating products like crystal paperweights engraved with "frowning at the thousand critics" or canvas bags featuring handwritten Lu Xun's calligraphy (Figure 7), transforming these items into cultural expression carriers for consumers. This series achieved sales exceeding 10,293 units and garnered over 1,092 reviews, becoming the best-selling IP series under Humanistic Treasure. Similarly, Shanghai Translation Publishing House's Woolf-themed series focuses on the literary characteristics of Woolf's stream-of-consciousness style, designing bookmarks and book covers with abstract lines and soft tones (Figure 8) to convey a refined and contemplative cultural atmosphere. The series reached sales of over 11,500 units and 1,784 reviews, setting a record for the highest sales of its IP series.



Figure 6: The canvas bag from the Cultural Relics Publishing House



Figure 7 Lu Xun Series Cultural and Creative Products



Figure 8 Woolf-themed cultural and creative products

3.The Formation Logic and Presentation Characteristics of Individual Styles in Publishing House's Cultural and Creative Products

The distinctive style of a publisher's cultural and creative products emerges from the interplay of its cultural DNA, design philosophy, and market positioning, serving as a personalized aesthetic expression. These creations primarily draw from nationally recognized IPs and compulsory education reading lists, making them more likely to resonate widely. Shared emotional connections foster familiarity and warmth, while the content possesses enduring vitality across generations. Each generation continually reinterprets and reflects on these materials. Their formation is not accidental but a systematic process involving content curation, core refinement, and design solidification. Due to varying resource endowments, different publishers have developed their own unique stylistic paradigms.

3.1 Qihai Manufacturing Bureau: The Poetic Reconstruction Style of Literary Imagery

As a premier comprehensive translation publisher in China, Shanghai Translation Publishing House (STPH) centers its core resources on foreign literary classics, which defines its signature style—a poetic reinterpretation rooted in foreign literary imagery. The creative products of STPH are developed through a meticulous process: first, selecting visually striking literary images from works by classic authors like Tolstoy, Woolf, and Kenji Miyazawa; then refining these into soft, adorable animal motifs and retro-inspired scenes; and finally, combining them with textiles, paper, and soft color palettes to create a refined, artfully soothing aesthetic.

Transforming abstract literary concepts into tangible forms, this approach materializes literary imagination through physical representations. A prime example is the design of soft-cute accessories and bookmarks inspired by characters like the Milky Way Cow and Polar Bear from Kenji Miyazawa's "Night on the Galactic Railroad." The immersive experience is realized by constructing a comprehensive literary scene IP matrix. Qihai Manufacturing Bureau has developed nine IP series, including Eternal Summer Garden and Yueshang Bookstore, each corresponding to a literary setting that collectively forms an interconnected literary universe. The 219 products have achieved total sales exceeding 50,000 yuan, far surpassing industry averages. The integration of reading functionality with literary aesthetics is characterized by poetic elements. For instance, the book pouches in the Cold Raven Café series feature coffee brown as their primary color and vintage coffee cup patterns, turning book storage into a poetic "literary café experience" (see Table 1).

Table 1 Cultural and Creative Products of Qihai Manufacturing Bureau Store

IP series	product classification	sales volume	Comments
Oriental Archives	Backpack, bookmark, book cover, shoulder bag, manuscript bag, decorative cloth, notebook, manuscript paper, hanging rope, storage tube, organizing bag	6300+	1497+
Sea Book Fair	Backpack, book bag, book cover, book pouch, book protector, book clip, hanging rope, storage tube	4600+	737+
Crows Café	Backpack, hanging decorations, book clips, book bags, book covers, book protectors, decorative cloth, notebooks, manuscript paper, hanging ropes, storage tubes, organizing bags	9077+	1667+
Black Cat Concert	Bookmarks, Notes	2600+	600+
Book Physics Society	Backpack, book cover, book bag, hanging decorations, book clips, notebook, manuscript paper, hanging rope, storage tube, organizing bag	2646+	712+
Woolf theme	Bookmarks, book covers, hanging decorations, socks, hanging ropes, book covers, backpacks, phone clips	11500+	1784+
Galaxy Railway Post Office	Book bag, bookmark, socks, decorative cloth, paper	2600+	1010+

Yongxia Garden	Book bag, book cover, school bag, hanging decorations, flower arrangement pocket, socks, book protector, organizing bag, bookmark	3974+	746+
Yexiang Bookstore	Backpack, book bag, hanging decorations, bookmark, book cover, book protector, decorative cloth, notebook, notepad, paper	6594+	1634+

(Note: Continued Table)

Market data reveals that this poetic reimagining style demonstrates exceptional user engagement. All IP series under Qihai Manufacturing Bureau have garnered over 600+ comments, with the Woolf-themed and Cold Raven Cafe series surpassing 1,600+ comments, demonstrating the perfect alignment between the style and target audience's aesthetic preferences.

3.2 The Treasure of Humanities: Contemporary Revitalization of Classic IPs

The core resources of People's Literature Publishing House mainly include China classical literature and modern and contemporary classics, with its "Humanistic Treasure" brand forming the contemporary revitalization of classic IPs. The formation logic of its style reflects the core characteristics of balancing tradition and modernity. On one hand, it adheres to the historical depth of the Four Great Classical Novels and the humanistic spirit of Lu Xun's works as the cultural core of classic IPs. On the other hand, it adopts contemporary design language and product forms to make classic IPs suitable for the aesthetic preferences of young consumers. This style not only meets the cultural identity needs of consumers but also addresses the issue of traditional cultural and creative products appearing outdated.

For popular IPs like the Four Great Classical Novels, we implement differentiated design strategies to enhance symbolic recognition. For example, the "Romance of the Three Kingdoms" series features martial general figurines, while the "Dream of the Red Chamber" collection includes decorative paintings of the Twelve Beauties of Jinling. For literary IPs like Lu Xun, the focus shifts to conveying spiritual essence, as seen in sweatshirts featuring his famous quotes and notebooks incorporating elements from his manuscripts. This tiered strategy has driven high sales across all IP series, with the Four Great Novels series exceeding 2,000+ units sold and the Lu Xun series surpassing 10,000 units (see Table 2). Category innovation breaks traditional constraints, introducing unconventional products like baseball uniforms, blankets, and coffee cups. The "Journey to the West" baseball uniform series expands product usage scenarios. Emotional empowerment leverages classic IPs to awaken collective memory, exemplified by the Lu Xun-themed "Frowning at a Thousand Pointers" canvas bag, which has become a cultural symbol for young consumers to express individuality.

Table 2 Cultural and Creative Products of the Humanistic Treasure Store

IP series	product classification	Sales volume	Comments
The Four Great Classical Novels Series	Illustration books, paperweights, bookmarks, T-shirts, baseball uniforms, postcards, fridge magnets, folders, masks, art books, decorative gift boxes, pop-up books, canvas bags, tea sets, eye masks, computer desk pads, cotton socks, mugs,	10031+	2918+
Lu Xun	T-shirt, canvas bag, postcard, brooch, fridge magnet, notebook, folder, sticker, phone stand, wool vest, round fan, book stand, gift box, blanket, pendant, glass cup, folding fan, book cover, coffee cup, thermos, ballpoint pen, hoodie, bookmark, decorative item, umbrella, fruit fork, sock, book cover, sachet, paperweight	10293+	1092+
Fyodor Dostoyevsky	Keychain, glass cup, notebook, canvas bag, fridge magnet	250	67



Tolstoy	Refrigerator magnets, bookmarks, book covers, canvas bags, glass cups, notebooks, eye masks	624+	201+
The Harry Potter series	Bookmarks, Notebooks, Gift Boxes, Cards, Building Blocks	156	36
The Andersen Fairy Tales series	Gift box, socks, coffee cup, canvas bag	74	37
Shakespeare	Bookplates, gift boxes, round fans, scarves, eye masks, fridge magnets, canvas bags, coffee cups	424+	64

(Note: Continued Table)

The success of "The Treasure of Humanities" demonstrates the market potential of revitalizing classic IPs with contemporary styles. Its Taobao store boasts 340,000 followers, with total sales exceeding 25,000 yuan across 10 IP series—a far cry from Chongwen Bookstore, a publisher without distinctive branding. Despite being a seven-year veteran, Chongwen Bookstore sold merely 2 notebooks (Table 3), while Fanbu Bag, a nine-year established cultural heritage publisher, sold only 6 items (Table 4). These figures vividly illustrate how unique branding significantly enhances market competitiveness.

Table 3 Chongwen Bureau

Product Category	sales volume	Comments
desk calendar	0	0
jotter	2	0

Table 4: Cultural Relics Publishing House

Product Category	sales volume	Comments
canvas bag	6	2
calendar	20	24
badge	3	0
mouse pad	1	0

4. Optimization Path of Publishing House's Cultural and Creative Design Aesthetics and Individual Style

To achieve a virtuous cycle of aesthetic enhancement, stylistic refinement, and market expansion in publishing house cultural and creative products, three key dimensions must be optimized: resource exploration, design innovation, and market adaptation. This approach addresses persistent challenges in some publishers, including insufficient cultural depth, stylistic homogeneity, and the disconnect between functionality and aesthetics. Design serves as the soul of these products—it goes beyond visual presentation to tell book-related stories, convey emotions, and strike a balance between aesthetic appeal and practicality.

4.1 Deep Cultivation of Publishing Resources, Consolidating the Core of Cultural Beauty

Cultural aesthetics constitute the core strength of publishers' creative endeavors. By strategically leveraging proprietary publishing resources, publishers can optimize design aesthetics, transforming content into cultural symbols that culminate in profound aesthetic expression. To achieve this, publishers should curate visually compelling and culturally impactful materials, assemble cross-functional teams integrating editorial and design expertise, and distill the essence of these resources. This approach enables the successful conversion of cultural depth into designable visual symbols, ultimately building a comprehensive symbol repository. A prime example is Shanghai Translation Publishing House, which drew inspiration from Kenji Miyazawa's works to develop the

"Galaxy Railway" imagery. Through analyzing its healing and dream symbolism, the publisher created iconic symbols like polar bears and the Galaxy emblem, establishing a successful IP series. This model offers valuable insights for other publishers seeking to replicate and expand their creative design strategies.

4.2 Enhancing Style Identification and Developing a Distinctive Design Language

The development of a distinctive style requires a consistent design language. Publishers should establish unique visual identities through three key elements: symbols, materials, and color schemes. First, define the logic for selecting core symbols — such as materializing literary imagery in Qihai Manufacturing Bureau's designs or modernizing classic symbols from Humanistic Treasures. Second, choose materials that align with the style: textiles or paper for literary works, metal or solid wood for classic pieces, using personalized techniques to convey aesthetic essence. Finally, establish a fixed color palette, like the soft macaron hues in Qihai's cultural products or the retro color clashes in Humanistic Treasures 'store displays. Crucially, the style should match the publisher's positioning: specialized publishers may emphasize minimalist rationality, while literary publishers can focus on poetic sensibility, creating a competitive edge through differentiation.

4.3 Balancing Functionality and Aesthetics to Meet Market Demands

Market recognition represents the ultimate value of design aesthetics. Publishers 'cultural and creative products must balance functional and aesthetic appeal while addressing consumers' practical needs. Functionally, they should develop multi-scenario adaptable products that seamlessly integrate reading and daily life. Aesthetically, these products should combine visual appeal with social media shareability – like the Lu Xun-themed sweaters from Humanistic Treasures, which not only showcase artistic value but also spark viral sharing. In category design, publishers should avoid rigid approaches, adjusting product portfolios based on market data and feedback. For instance, Humanistic Treasures has expanded into cross-category products like baseball uniforms and blankets to meet young consumers' demands, enhancing market competitiveness. Designers must prioritize establishing user feedback mechanisms, optimizing designs through metrics like comment counts and user surveys to boost sales.

5. Conclusion

This study examines publishing houses' cultural and creative products, analyzing core features and dialectical relationships between design aesthetics and individual styles through case studies of Qihai Manufacturing Bureau and Humanistic Treasures, combined with Taobao platform sales data. The research reveals that publishing house cultural and creative designs primarily manifest through three structural dimensions: functional beauty, formal beauty, and cultural beauty. The cultural beauty, serving as the core element, originates from publishing content resources. Through processes of resource selection, symbolic refinement, and design solidification, it develops distinctive aesthetic styles, demonstrating differentiated design languages. The integration of aesthetic connotation and individual style directly determines market performance. Successful book cultural and creative products fundamentally rely on in-depth exploration and transformation of book content IPs, rather than simple element accumulation. Only products with distinct styles and solid aesthetic connotations can gain widespread consumer appreciation, achieving sales volumes far exceeding those of styleless products.

Research confirms that the core competitiveness of publishers 'cultural and creative products lies in their dual strengths: profound cultural depth and distinctive stylistic innovation. When designing such products, publishers should prioritize these two aspects to establish unique development paths. By deeply exploring publishing resources to uncover cultural beauty, creating distinctive style identifiers for differentiation, and balancing functional and aesthetic needs to meet market demands, publishing institutions serve as both custodians of cultural heritage and pioneers of industrial innovation. Future research could further investigate the aesthetic differentiation among various publishers' cultural and creative products, as well as the aesthetic expression of virtual cultural and creative products in the digital era, providing more precise theoretical support for industry development.

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