

The Research of Regional Culture Characteristics of Tourism Commodities Based on Cross-Cultural Experience

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Abstract. The booming of modern tourism contributes to an increasing enhancement of the worldwide innovation level of tourist commodities, as well as the continuous expanding scope and scale of output to the world. In a time when tourism activities are increasingly internationalizing and globalizing, the connection between tourism commodities and cross-cultural tourists are getting closer and closer, and the tourism experience economy that advocates cross-cultural experience has received widespread attention. The development of tourism experience economy is of great significance to the protection and development of regional culture, the realization of the sustainable development of tourism and the promotion of the internationalization of the tourism industry in China. With the popularity of the application of modern information technology, the information transmission and cognition between tourists and tourism commodities have become more and more direct and convenient. When facing cross-cultural tourists, the cognition and cultural connotations of tourism commodities are also increasingly challenged. How tourism commodities are perceived and accepted by cross-cultural users and how we better meet the needs of cross-cultural users in product experience, regional cultural characteristics, and design are hotspots in the study of experience economy. Based on the study of regional cultural characteristics, this paper proposes the application system of the regional cultural design and research of "Archaeology - Interpretation - Innovation" to utilize the systematic design thinking framework to enhance the regional cultural connotations and characteristics of tourism commodities. It also studies how to effectively convey the experience of these cultural connotations and characteristics to the cross-cultural users. Meanwhile, with China Luoyang Peony Festival as an example, through in-depth studies of history, culture and art in Luoyang, this paper extracts the characteristics with local features and values from the rich regional culture and combines the Eastern and Western thoughts' semantic cognition of regional cultural symbols to study the effects of these characteristics on the design of tourism commodities and the experience of cross-culture. By establishing an analytical framework, this paper carries out a comparative study of these unique regional cultural characteristics. Through a design case of the tourism commodity, it also demonstrates the

design and application methods of these cultural characteristics so that a certain degree of enhancement and promotion can be brought to the innovative design approach of tourism commodities and that some reference can be provided for the study of the experience of tourism commodities. Finally, this paper provides proposals for the direction of future research of regional cultural design and application system of "Archaeology - Interpretation - Innovation".

Keywords: Cross-cultural Experience, Tourism Commodity, Regional Culture, Product Design.

1 Introduction

The combination of regional culture and tourism creates a huge consumer market. As an important medium to build the regional image and convey the regional culture, tourism commodities play an important role in this consumer market (Zhong, 2005). The proportion of tourism commodities in the tourism industry also marks the development level of cultural industry in the tourism region. Being different from local specialties, tourism commodities possess characteristics of high cultural connotations, distinctive regional features and outstanding memorial values and collection values. It also covers extensive categories, such as daily necessities, handicrafts, accessories and ornaments (Zhong, 2005). As an important part of the local tourism industry, tourism commodities have gained more and more attention and concern. Essentially, tourism is a kind of regional cultural experience (Wang, 2005). In this process, as a carrier, culture is inextricably linked to the region. Especially in the face of tourism experience of cross-cultural tourists, as the core value of tourism commodities, how regional features are effectively communicated and perceived has been a major concern in our previous studies.

As designers and developers of tourism commodities, when facing the complex features of the regional culture, we should not only keenly discover the needs of the market, but also dig out the connotations of the regional culture and apply them to the design processes in an effective manner. The tourism commodities with unique regional cultural features have important implications for the development and dissemination of tourist culture (Zhong, 2005). This paper focuses on the peony culture in Luoyang, China, introduces the main features of the regional culture in Luoyang and the distinctive characteristics of the peony culture in Luoyang, explores the excavation and application methods of the regional culture characteristics, puts forward a regional cultural design and application system of "Archaeology - Interpretation - Innovation", and discusses how to combine Eastern and Western cognitive thinking together to interpret such distinctive regional cultural features. This study attempts to establish a systematic and effective product design process to reflect the regional cultural features on tourism commodities through innovative means and to communicate them to the cross-cultural tourists in an effective manner. The results can be used to help designers to have a deeper understanding of the regional cultural features, reshape the regional cultural image of tourism commodities, and get market recognition and feedback.

2 Research Background

This study explores the design and development of tourism commodities in Luoyang. Luoyang is a typical regional culture and a representative one in China, and peony culture occupies an important position in Luoyang culture. They are of great significance to the cross-cultural cognition and experience of the regional cultural features of tourism commodities.

Located in western Henan, China, Luoyang is one of "the four holy cities" (Jerusalem, Mecca, Luoyang and Athens) in the world(Wang,Han,Wan,2013). It is not only the oriental starting point of Silk Road, but also a world cultural city named by the United Nations(Ni,2012). China's name is derived from the ancient city Luoyang(Ni,2012). Since Xia Dynasty, the first dynasty in Chinese history, there have been thirteen dynasties who established their capitals in Luoyang. Therefore, as the capital, Luoyang has a history of 1500 years, making it renowned for "the Imperial City of One Thousand Years"(Ni,2012). The Luoyang-centered Heluo culture is the source and core of Chinese civilization. "The River Maps and Luo Book" also originated from here and Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Metaphysics and Neo-Confucianism all started from here(Wang,Han,Wan,2013). Heluo region is considered to be the birthplace of Chinese culture and "the River Maps and Luo Book" is regarded as the onset of Chinese characters(Wang,Han,Wan,2013). Heluo culture shows the characteristics of China's orthodox culture. The climate in ancient Heluo region has four distinct seasons and fertile land(Ni,2012). It is located right in the center of Mainland China and has been China's political, economical and cultural center since the pre-Qin period. It is named "the center of China"(Shao,2008).

Peony is China's national flower and peony is renowned for Luoyang, " the Imperial City of One Thousand Years and the City of Peony"(Ni,2012). As an old saying goes, "Luoyang peony is the finest under heaven"(Shao,2008). Luoyang peony has large buds and gorgeous colors as well as national beauty and heavenly fragrance(Shao,2008). Since ancient times, Luoyang peony has been endowed with the meanings of wealth, good fortune, and prosperity and represents the style of the Chinese nation as a great country. Peony settled down in Luoyang since the Sui Dynasty(Shao,2008). Due to the appropriate land, its flowers are colorful and beautiful, topping all the other flowers in the world. Luoyang was the capital of the Tang Dynasty and the development of peony culture in Tang Dynasty laid a solid foundation for the development of China's peony and the flourishing of peony culture(Shao,2008). The famous Luoyang Peony Festival is held in April every year. During that month, the entire Luoyang city is surrounded by the booming peony flowers. Guests from every corner of the world come here to admire the beauty of the peony flowers. According to the latest statistics released by the Luoyang Municipal Tourism Bureau, the 31th Luoyang Peony Festival in 2013 has attracted 18,699,500 tourists with a total tourism revenue of 11.22 billion RMB(Luoyang Municipal Tourism Bureau,2013). Among these tourists, the number of foreign ones was 172,500 and the tourism earned 41.8115 million USD; The tourist areas (spots) have been visited by 15,894,600 tourists. The average occupancy rate of the urban star-rated hotels was 85% (Calculated by the Municipal Tourism Development Commission and released

by Statistics Bureau of Luoyang City). It can be seen that, in terms of regional cultural influence, Luoyang Peony Festival is very unique. At the same time, Luoyang is also one of the most famous tourist cities in China. Among the 300 copies of the questionnaire conducted by us, Longmen Grottoes (World Cultural Heritage), White Horse Temple, Guanyu's Mausoleum and Tian Zi Jia Liu all are the representative tourism images of Luoyang (Table 1).

Table 1. Statistical analysis of recognitions of tourism images in Luoyang

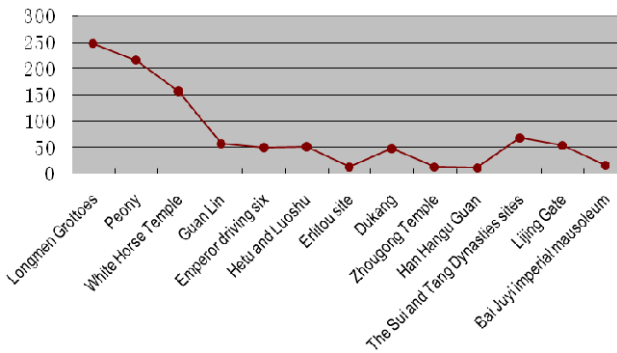
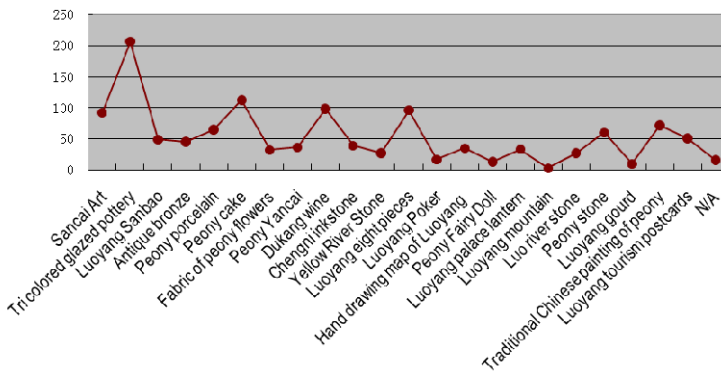


Table 2. Statistical analysis of recognitions of tourism commodities in Luoyang



The tourism commodities in Luoyang market are also mainly characterized by He-luo culture and peony culture. Among the 300 copies of the questionnaire conducted by us, Tang Sancai, Peony Porcelain, the peony cake, the Eight Pieces and Dukang Wine are best-known (Table 2). It also indirectly confirms that peony culture elements holds a high proportion in the tourism commodities in Luoyang. But it can also be found that what dominate the tourism commodity market are mainly traditional crafts and local products and that a small number of cultural and creative commodities do not form the market influence. In another statistics carried out by us, three prominent issues exist in the tourism commodities in Luoyang, which are the homogenization of tourism commodities, the failure to better reveal the local characteristics of Luoyang, and low cultural values, respectively. The designing, packaging and

marketing ways of the tourism commodities in the market are still relatively traditional and original, and they do not have too much attraction in the eyes of cross-cultural tourists. How to enhance the cultural connotations and regional cultural features of tourism commodities to satisfy the culture communication and cognition in the cultural experience is the starting point of this study.

3 Literature Review

The previous studies have discussed the development strategies and design methods of tourism commodities from different angles. Based on the current related literature collected and organized by us, they mainly focus on the following directions:

There are a lot of research focuses from the perspective of the local traditional culture. For example, Tan Fangyuan carried out an in-depth study of the connotations of "the blessing" in Chinese culture in *Design of Tourism Commodities in Chinese "Blessing" Culture*, and proposed the application methods in the design. In *Inheritance and Application of Regional Culture in the Packaging Design of Featured Commodities in Dongguan*, Zhang Li mentioned the importance of a tight bond between the traditional culture and contemporary design elements. In his paper *The Application of Chinese Characters in the Design of Tourism Commodities*, Wang Yadong started from Chinese characters, a symbol of the traditional Chinese culture, analyzed the six methods that built the Chinese characters, summarized the application principles of Chinese characters in the design of tourism commodities, and explored the combination ways of Chinese characters in tourism commodities from the cultural, emotional, aesthetic and functional aspects. Some studies discussed the development strategies of local unique tourism commodities from the perspective of the local traditional culture. For example, Wang Hongbao obtained certain achievements in the study of innovation of traditional arts and crafts in *Study of Brand Enhancement of Tourism Commodities on the Basis of Regional Culture - A Case Study of Yan-Zhao Culture*. In *Application of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" Resources of Western Hubei in the Design of Tourism Souvenirs*, Qian Yu and Peng Hong applied the characteristic connotations of "Intangible Cultural Heritage" resources of western Hubei to the local tourism souvenirs and fully interpreted the design process from the imagery to the "materialization". In *Discussions of Several Problems about the Olympic Souvenirs*, with the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as an example, Li Chuanzhi and Ma Jinfu gave a comprehensive summary and elaboration of the development and business strategies of tourism souvenirs. In *Studies on Intercultural Communication of Graphic Design in the International Context*, Hu Rong made a thorough study of cross-cultural cognitive differences in the international context, and applied the research results in the design case. Gao Taiping carried out an in-depth study of the connotations and features of the regional culture in Luoyang from the perspective of Chinese philosophical thinking in *A Discussion of Development Ideas about Key Tourist Resources in Luoyang*.

In short, the regional culture is a central theme in current studies. However, some common shortcomings and deficiencies exist in these studies: firstly, these studies lack enough breadth and fail to give a comprehensive understanding of the regional

culture. Most studies are based on a local cultural phenomenon and a complete research system has not been formed. The lack of complete and systematic research methods also make it difficult to extend the research results to other areas. Secondly, these studies put more emphasis on the refining of local culture and the cross-cultural cognitive differences are rarely mentioned. In the face of cross-cultural users, the effectiveness of the design is hard to be reflected.

4 Research Methods

In this study, we put forward a regional cultural design and application system of "Archaeology-Interpretation-Innovation" so that a systematic design thinking framework can be used to enhance the regional cultural connotations and features of tourism commodities and that the experience of these cultural connotations and features can be effectively communicated to the cross-cultural users. This framework has three levels, which are Cultural Archaeology, Semantic Interpretation and Design Innovation, respectively. These levels are interrelated and constitute a system (Figure 1). They made a combination of excavation and study of native culture, philosophical interpretations and cross-cultural semantic interpretations of Eastern and Western thinking, and the innovations on cultural connotations and experience of products based on modern design thinking.

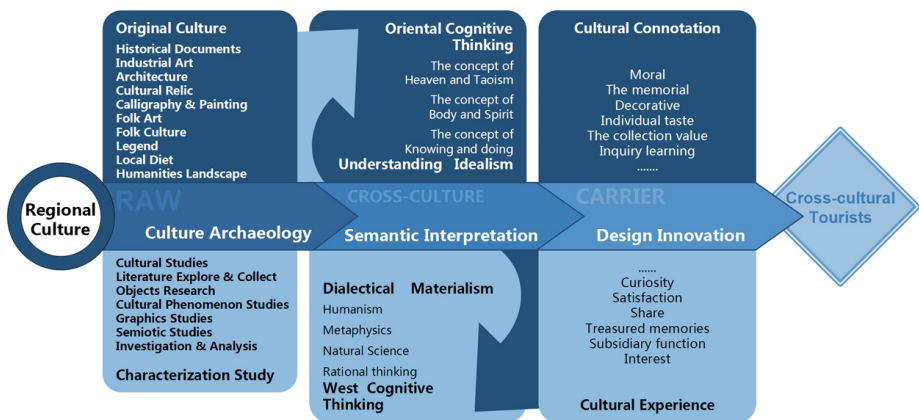


Fig. 1. The regional cultural design and application system of "Archaeology - Interpretation - Innovation"

Level 1: Cultural Archaeology. The cultural archaeology mentioned in this study refers to the excavations of the original cultures in the design sense, and the collection, sorting and analysis of the original cultures like historical literature, traditional arts and crafts, architecture and cultural relics. We use research methods like cultural studies, artifacts research, semiotics of cultural phenomena studies, and graphics research to explore and conclude the regional cultural features.

Level 2: Semantic Interpretation. Semantic interpretations presented in this study means that the Eastern and Western philosophy is used to carry out cross-cultural

semantic interpretation on the regional cultural features. We strive to use the main ideas in the Oriental classical philosophy to analyze the profound connotations of the regional culture and compare them to the Western philosophy so that they can be effectively communicated to the cross-cultural objects. According to the characteristics of the cultural experience of cross-cultural tourists, the emotional elements are refined to accumulate reliable material basis for the subsequent design.

Level 3: Design Innovation. Based on the related design material and basis refined in the phase of Semantic Interpretation, a design innovation is performed on the cultural connotations and cultural experience of tourism commodities. In terms of the cultural connotations of these products, the tourism commodities' characteristics like moral, memorial, decoration and individuation are highlighted, which are all full of cultural connotations; in terms of the cultural experience of these products, the experience characteristics like adventure, satisfaction, memory and fun are emphasized. Through design innovations, the regional cultural features of tourism commodities can better serve the needs of cross-cultural experience, thereby enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of these products.

Based on the regional cultural design and application system of "Archaeology-Interpretation-Innovation", our study is divided into three stages:

Stage 1: We carry out extensive collection, screening and sorting of the background information of the regional culture in Luoyang, list the typical cultural features in Luoyang, sequence the recognitions of these features, and select the most representative regional cultural features. On the basis of these representative cultural features, we extensively collect the design materials, patterns and graphic symbols associated with these features.

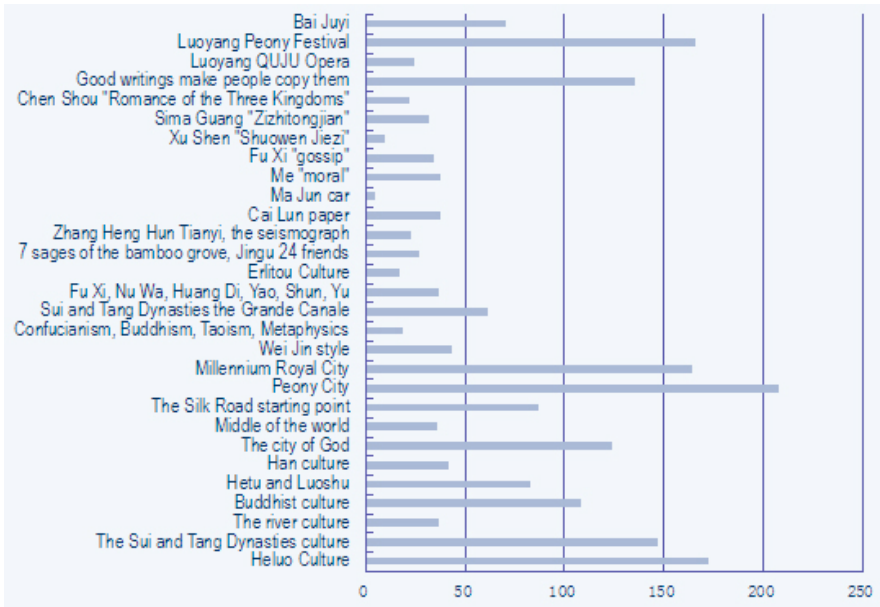
Stage 2: We perform cross-cultural semantic interpretation and transformation of these features, select internationally accepted tourism souvenirs, transform the design materials, patterns and graphic symbols of the regional cultural features with modern design approaches.

Stage 3: In the design processes, we make further study and revision of the characteristics of cultural connotations and cultural experience. At the same time, in accordance with the actual situation, we adjust the design processes of these products a bit.

5 Results

Based on the regional cultural features of tourism commodities, we conduct a survey of the regional culture in Luoyang. Among the 300 copies of the questionnaire retrieved, as famous tourist markers, Longmen Grottoes, Peony and White Horse Temple rank top three. In the questionnaire survey about the cultural symbols in Luoyang, among a total of 29 typical cultural symbols in Luoyang, Peony Flower City, Heluo culture and Luoyang Peony Festival rank top three (Table 3). It can be seen from the survey that peony culture plays an important role in the regional culture in Luoyang and is an iconic symbol of Luoyang City.

Table 3. The results of the survey of typical symbols in Louyang



In the following studies, we list the typical peony varieties in Luoyang and conduct a cognitive survey. The results are shown in Table 4 in descending order.

Table 4. The results of the cognitive survey of peony varieties in Luoyang

				
Luoyang Red	Black peony	Qiao sisters	Green Peony	Yao Huang
AVG. 0.533	AVG. 0.413	AVG. 0.287	AVG. 0.287	AVG. 0.250
				
Luoyang Fairy	The champion Red	Drunk Yang Fei	Wei violet	Purple blue
AVG. 0.213	AVG. 0.210	AVG. 0.177	AVG. 0.160	AVG. 0.133
				
White jade	Hu Hong	snow white tower	Fire refining elixir	Coral algae
AVG. 0.083	AVG. 0.077	AVG. 0.073	AVG. 0.050	AVG. 0.050
				
Case of red	Yellow peony	Shearing	Jin Pao red	Meat lotus
AVG. 0.033	AVG. 0.030	AVG. 0.023	AVG. 0.020	AVG. 0.013

Later, we list and compare the cross-cultural cognitive elements of peony, and divide the peony culture into eight disciplines based on the Eastern and Western cognitive layers (Figure 2). Meanwhile, according to the nature of the carrier of these morals, we collect and select appropriate carriers from international tourism commodities. In this study, we select two product cases: fridge magnets and Luoyang soup bowl.

In the product design phase, we add the graphic creativity to these products based on the characteristics of cultural elements of peony and further improve the cultural connotations and experience connotations of these products from the perspectives of shape and decoration (Figure 3). In the design of peony fridge magnets, we adopt the imagery form of red peony in Luoyang, and put an emphasis on the gorgeous and plump features of peony in the graphic design, meaning abundance and blessings; in the design of Luoyang soup bowl, the imagery form of peony is also adopted. Peony elements are integrated into the design of the bottom of the bowl. A aesthetic imagery feature of peony is its aroma fragrance. When the users eat all the food in the bowl and see the peony at the bottom which means "fragrance at the bottom", it encourages people not to waste food and advocate a frugal and non-extravagant attitude. At the same time, in Chinese pronunciation, "fragrance" is equal to "good fortune". The plump huge peony flower also symbolizes good fortune and prosperity.

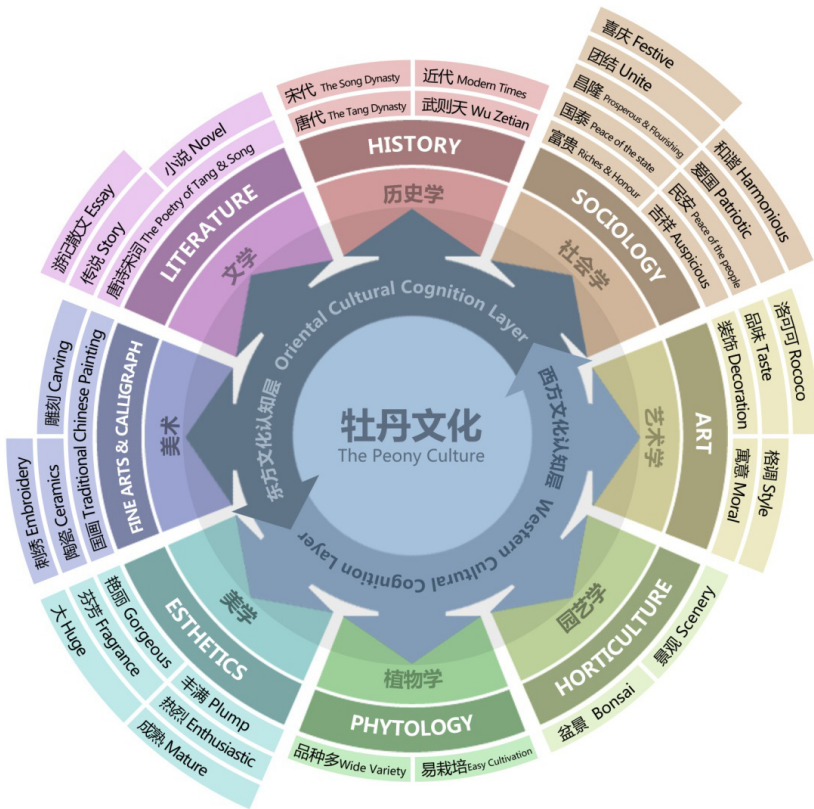


Fig. 2. Peony culture - Cross-cultural cognitive layer

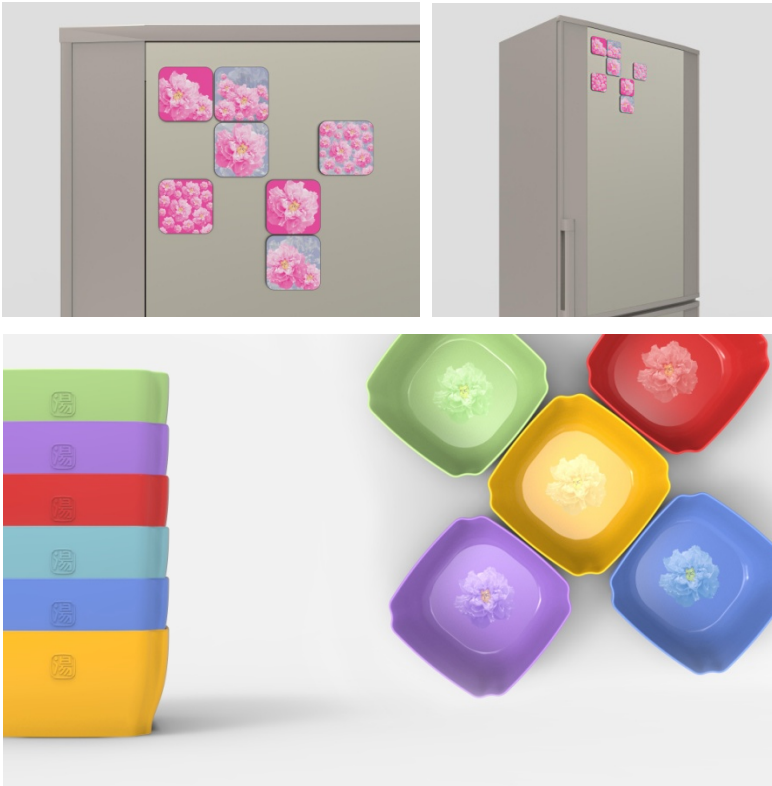


Fig. 3. Product design case based on the regional culture features in Luoyang

6 Conclusions and Discussions

The excavation researches for regional cultural features continue. Among them, the excavation, interpretation and innovation methods of the regional cultural features can help us specify the research ideas and methods of the regional cultural features and carry out more reasonable and in-depth excavation, transformation and interpretation of the regional culture, thereby achieving the desired innovative application. Judging from the current research situation, there are still some issues to be further improved and developed. Firstly, A feedback survey system for cross-cultural users is needed. A remote access system should be established to collect data so as to evaluate the product experience of cross-cultural users. We will continue to develop relevant quantitative analysis system in the future studies. Secondly, it is also needed to further improve the quantitative evaluation system of the cognitive elements of the regional cultural features. In terms of the cognitive elements extracted from the regional cultural features, how to classify and quantify them still remains an issue that requires further study.

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