



Research on IP Creation and Industrialization Development Strategy of Silk Road Spirit from the Perspective of Cultural Sociology

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Abstract. In September 2013, President Xi proposed the construction of the “New Silk Road Economic Belt”, aiming to promote economic cooperation and cultural exchange among countries along the route. In this context, the intellectual property (IP) transformation of the “Silk Road Spirit” holds significant importance. The Silk Road Spirit encompasses the spiritual core of “peaceful cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation”. As a platform for multi-ethnic and multi-cultural communication, the fundamental connotation of the Silk Road has, since its inception, deepened the pattern of mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation, creating a “community of shared future”. This paper aims to explore the emergence and development of the Silk Road Spirit as a cultural phenomenon from the perspective of cultural sociology. By delving into the essence and values of the Silk Road Spirit, it provides guidance and inspiration for its IP industrialization, aiming to create culturally attractive and influential products. Along the Silk Road, there are numerous historical and cultural sites and natural landscapes. By IP-based Silk Road Spirit, the cultural development of surrounding regions is catalyzed, and cities are interconnected through IP images, fostering regional industrial development.

Keywords: cultural sociology; Silk Road Spirit; IP-based; industrialization.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The Silk Road Spirit nurtured along the Silk Road is the collective summary of the Chinese people’s interactions among the various ethnic groups along this route in terms of politics, economy, culture, and many other aspects, representing the ideological achievement of continuous exchanges and collisions between Chinese civilization and the cultures of other nations worldwide. The Silk Road Spirit, as a cultural spirit that we need to carry forward in the new era, requires analysis and research on its IP-based construction and industrialization development from the perspective of cultural soci-

ology, which will undoubtedly contribute to the promotion of its cultural connotations and the strengthening of cultural self-confidence.

1.2 Literature Review

Searching the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) Journal Database using “Silk Road Spirit” as the search term revealed a total of 1260 publications in the decade from 2013 to 2023, including 681 academic journals, 339 academic dissertations, 33 conference papers, and 94 newspaper articles. Notably, the main thematic terms include “Belt and Road Initiative” with 215 related publications, “Silk Road Spirit” with 75 publications, “Maritime Silk Road” with 25 publications, “Golden Bridge on Silk Road” with 22 publications, “Flower Rains along Silk Road” with 20 publications, and “Silk Road Literature” with 17 publications. Analysis indicates that domestic scholars’ research on Silk Road Spirit mostly focused on research related to the “Belt and Road Initiative” proposed by President Xi. This paper intends to systematically sort out the origin and development of the Silk Road Spirit from the perspective of cultural sociology, and then explore strategies of IP-based Silk Road Spirit and industrialization development in cultural inheritance, cross-disciplinary collaboration, and brand development relying on IP image design. Through the implementation of these strategies, the goal is to promote the development of the Silk Road Spirit industry, promote economic development, and enhance cultural exchange and friendly cooperation among relevant countries and regions.

1.3 Purpose and Significance of Topic Selection

Cultural sociology is a discipline that studies the emergence, the special laws of development, and related social effects of cultural phenomena. It predominantly treats culture as an intrinsic variable within society, representing a sociological theoretical construction with culture as its central concept. In recent years, some scholars have started applying the content of cultural sociology to the study of art and culture. However, the number of achievements is not substantial, and the application of cultural sociology in the research on the Silk Road Spirit is even less common.

The Silk Road Spirit itself is deeply rooted in China’s outstanding traditional culture and is also a precious heritage of human civilization. Particularly, the spirit it embodies, characterized by “win-win cooperation” and “openness and inclusiveness”, provides a rational path for the development of unstable world order in our current international exchanges. Simultaneously, it holds significant implications for promoting the “Belt and Road Initiative”, realizing a new type of international relations based on cooperation and mutual benefit. This study employs cultural sociology theory as a vital method for examining the process of the Silk Road Spirit’s emergence and its varied societal functions in different periods and backgrounds. By adopting the perspective of cultural sociology, the research analyzes the reasons behind the emergence of the Silk Road Spirit in historical and cultural backgrounds, contributing reflections and exploration for its promotion and industrialization development.

2 Silk Road Spirit

The Silk Road, broadly speaking, mainly consists of four routes: the desert trade route starting from Chang'an in the Eurasian continental hinterland; the maritime trade route from the South China Sea to the Arabian Sea, extending to the eastern coast of Africa; the grassland Silk Road connecting the Eurasian continent through the Mongolian grasslands; and the ancient Tea Horse Road linking the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau and South Asia.^[1] This paper primarily focuses on the exploration of the Desert Silk Road. The eastern segment of the Desert Silk Road, from Chang'an to Dunhuang, became a crucial transportation hub connecting the East and the West. Its construction began in the Western Han Dynasty and reached its peak in the Tang Dynasty. Subsequently, due to dynastic changes and policy shifts, the Desert Silk Road, which was originally the major trade route, transformed into a channel for religious and cultural exchanges and gradually declined. However, whether in the exchanges of merchants and trade or in cultural and religious interactions, it involved the exchange and collision of different ideologies and cultures among various countries, which contributed differently to the cultural and economic development of the surrounding countries of the Silk Road, leaving vivid imprints on the historical trajectory. Especially with President Xi proposing the "Belt and Road Initiative", this millennia-old route has embraced new missions and challenges, embodying a new Silk Road Spirit in the historical currents of the new era.

In the new era, the intangible cultural heritage, primarily represented by Dunhuang, is also facing new challenges and opportunities. As a distinctive cultural symbol in China's international exchanges, how to inherit and popularize it in the new era has become an essential aspect of carrying forward the Silk Road Spirit. Nowadays, we live in a new era of the multi-dimensional combination of digital technology and people's material and spiritual lives, and cultural presentations should also catch a ride with digitalization.^[2] Therefore, the "IP" design of Silk Road Spirit can promote the synchronous resonance between mainstream values and the development of the times, explore the integration between Silk Road Spirit and people's lives, break geographical restrictions, and achieve comprehensive cultural exchange and promotion^[3].

Based on the IP-based creation of "Silk Road Spirit", this paper creates an immersive and dynamic mode of communication and subtly penetrates the "Silk Road Spirit" into various aspects of life through the popular IP, thus expanding its cultural influence. The "Silk Road Spirit" was born alongside the Silk Road and will continue to expand its influence further with the "Belt and Road Initiative". "Silk Road Spirit" in its early stages of development embodies a spirit of partnership, which crystallizes the core values of "peaceful cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutually beneficial cooperation".

3 IP-based Creation and Industrialization Development of Silk Road Spirit

3.1 Creation of IP-based Silk Road Spirit

Traversing numerous regions along the Silk Road, the selection of the Silk Road Spirit's IP image requires a thorough exploration of representative cities along the route, and then applying it to IP image design through creative design means. Because the cities along the route involve various cultural elements, it is necessary to comprehensively refine and integrate them, allowing the public to associate the chosen image with the Silk Road. The Dunhuang-related cultural elements and spiritual images along the Silk Road are carefully distilled and selected, to identify iconic symbols that best represent their spiritual characteristics and can integrate Dunhuang-related elements to design a fundamental spiritual and cultural framework, which enables the public to experience its spiritual connotation while engaging in consumption. In the process of building industrialization development, it is necessary to conduct comprehensive research on the surrounding regions along the route, combine modern aesthetic forms, reasonably develop industrialization clusters, and form a serialized and interconnected industrial cluster of Silk Road Spirit inheritance. This approach effectively showcases the continuity of spiritual culture, emphasizes historical significance, and allows the reuse of representative elements, thereby increasing practicality.^[4] The IP-based Silk Road Spirit refers to crafting stories related to the Silk Road into a cultural symbol that can connect various elements along the Silk Road through certain media narration, possessing high recognizability, inherent popularity, and strong commercial potential as shown below(Figure 1).

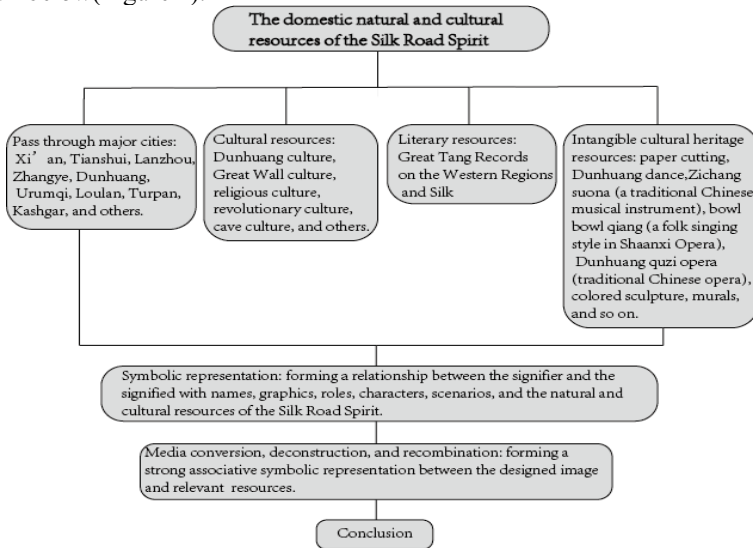


Fig. 1. IP elements of the Silk Road spirit

The development and design of products centered around symbolic IP must closely connect with people's lives, especially by incorporating local features along the Silk Road, such as Quzi opera and Dunhuang paper-cutting. Utilizing the color palette of these opera costumes or the artistic forms of paper-cutting enhances the aesthetic functionality of IP image design, allowing the public to visually and sensually experience the cultural attributes of the region where the Silk Road Spirit resides.^[5] Simultaneously, it is crucial to develop experiential forms that are both entertaining and interactive, which can integrate with other industries and optimize the resource advantages of different regions to achieve the long-term development of the tourism industry. The possible approaches include creating a Silk Road-themed snack street with characteristic foods and developing other internet-famous places, to enrich the tourism experience with various forms of cultural and creative products. By inheriting and developing folk cultures from different regions, the ancient Silk Road has been flourishing for a long time, and the surrounding regions along the route contain various aspects of daily life and folk culture that embody the Silk Road Spirit that can be used for reference and integration, so it is possible to build a brand culture. When developing a local folk culture in different regions, leveraging regional advantages and relying on the Silk Road can further deepen the exploration, protection, and inheritance of local culture, to drive the development of other industries.^[6] Meanwhile, we should improve the corresponding infrastructure to ensure the coordinated development of informatization, industrialization, and modernization, shape the brand spirit culture of the Silk Road, and achieve regional radiation by selecting node cities.

3.2 Industrialization Development of the Silk Road

In the process of creating and developing the Silk Road Spirit's IP and industry, particular attention should be paid to strengthening brand construction. The tourism resources along the Silk Road are rich, but these resources are relatively scattered, operating independently without integration or connection. Therefore, in the development of IP-based Silk Road Spirit and its industrialization, comprehensive layout and planning are essential. Starting from an overall perspective, various provinces and cities should carry out effective cultural connections and rationally integrate historical factors, modern civilization, intangible cultural heritage, and other elements, achieving a well-organized layout and allowing for integrated development in industrialization.^[7] By integrating the intangible cultural heritage around the Silk Road with digital means, an intangible cultural exhibition hall can be established to display relevant intangible cultural heritage generated by the birth of the Silk Road. Simultaneously, it enables more efficient cooperation and win-win partnerships with other brand cultures. Through multi-dimensional and multi-channel exploration of cultural content and enriching the design forms of IP images, the process aims to maximize commercial value. The primary approach for content development and format innovation is through "symbolic IP + creativity".

In the process of constructing the IP-based Silk Road Spirit, there is a focus on strengthening the integration of culture and tourism, especially leveraging the skills of local folk craftsmen for hands-on craft experience activities, which not only allows the

inheritors to benefit and increases awareness among more tourists but also serves as a means of publicity and promotion. Additionally, integrating these handicrafts into tourism products enables visitors to better experience the diverse cultural activities along the Silk Road, feeling the spirit of openness, inclusiveness, mutual learning, and mutual exchange inherent in the Silk Road Spirit. Simultaneously, Quzi opera and Dunhuang dances can be combined to hold different literary and artistic activities, so that some lesser-known traditional dances, music, sacrifices, and other intangible cultural heritages in Dunhuang and cities along the Silk Road can be displayed, raising awareness and understanding of intangible cultural heritages and achieving a win-win situation for both the economy and culture. Through the development of derivative products, the linkage between industries in different regions along the Silk Road can be promoted. Utilizing the industrialization development of a diverse IP value chain, we build industrial value, establish brand strategies, and form a long-term mechanism.

4 Conclusion

The ultimate goal of the IP transformation and industrialization of the Silk Road Spirit is to embody historical and cultural values in products and artistic expressions. The historical, freight, clothing, religious, and folk cultures contained in the Silk Road are all indispensable spiritual and cultural heritage. When engaging in IP transformation and industrialization, a deeper demonstration of cultural confidence and national confidence is essential. (self-confidence) Based on cultural sociology, this paper reflects on the IP transformation and industrialization development of the Silk Road Spirit, proposing a strategy to collaboratively build an IP industrialization cluster in border cities, to achieve the integrated development of diverse regional cultures, connect provinces and cities for cultural cohesion, and construct a cultural cluster for the Silk Road Spirit brand. However, given the different development directions and economic levels among provinces and cities, achieving integrated development may require more government communication, and relying solely on private efforts may yield limited results. Nevertheless, in the process of building communication, it also upholds the principles of the new era Silk Road Spirit, emphasizing win-win cooperation, mutual benefit, and equality.

In conclusion, the Silk Road, as a trade route spanning ancient and modern times, embodies the national self-confidence of our country. Therefore, when engaging in IP design, it is crucial to consider its spiritual connotation more comprehensively, endowing the IP image with a higher level of value.

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