

DEVELOPING CULTURAL PRODUCTS TO PROMOTE LOCAL CULTURE: A MARKETING DESIGN FOR THE FORMER TAINAN STATE MAGISTRATE RESIDENCE

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ABSTRACT:

This paper explores the possibility of using cultural products as a city marketing strategy for the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence in Tainan City. Today, the Tainan City government has registered it as a city-level historical heritage site, and has completed its restoration and re-use plan. However, no practical marketing strategy has been formulated for promoting the site and raising cultural awareness among residents and tourists. In this paper, we developed an empirical design case to describe city image promotion by cultural products in the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence in Tainan City. Results indicate that cultural heritages provide various creative features. Each feature has an inherent storytelling ability that communicates with visitors. Through design, those cultural features can be transformed into unique and irreplaceable product identities that can be used for city marketing and urban regeneration.

Key words: Cultural Product, Storytelling Marketing, Historic Heritage, Cultural-Products Industries, Design Prototype Testing

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In the 1990s, Taiwan experienced industrial development and urban expansion. The trend resulted in heavy conflict between modernized development and historical conservation. Therefore, some historical buildings of international style have been neglected in the restructuring of urban space in large cities and in medium-small townships. This is similar to the experiences of Western and Japanese cities in the 1970s. In the viewpoint of globalization and localization, the government and its citizens pay much attention to local culture, history, traditions, and community identity because they believe that the unique attractiveness and value of a city's or township's cultures make them attractive to tourists, which may also bring economic benefits (Doratli et al., 2004; Hampton, 2005). To preserve and promote local culture, cultural products can be considered as regional marketing channels, which provide an easy-to-communicate touchpoint for showcasing culture. Through design, a product is able to embrace creativity, aesthetics, function, and other connections for the living's needs. "Cultural features are windows to the past" (Demand Media, Inc., 2011). Cultural features that are embedded into products are feasible to retain regional images and represent local traditions. For example, well-known landmarks, such as the An-Pin Fort and the Tainan Confucius Temple, have their own distinct products that showcase their history. These products, which are called cultural products, are recognized as cultural ambassadors that communicate with their visitors.

This paper explores the possibility of using cultural products as a city marketing strategy for the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence in Tainan City. The Tainan City government has registered it as a city-level historic heritage site and has completed its restoration and re-use plan in 2000. So far, there is less awareness on its image/branding development. This study developed a case study, with the participation of young local students, who gave their observations and contributed designs, to lead the youth in understanding their culture and to participate in city image development. Meanwhile, the outcomes provide practical designers, urban planners, and policy makers a view of the importance of cultural communication media through products. Results indicate that cultural products are emotional and commercial tools, which combine cultural features and creative design ideas to appeal to visitors' interests. This study explains the role of cultural and historical heritage in city image visualization development by developing products with storytelling ability as a marketing strategy for the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 THEORETICAL BASIS: CULTURAL PRODUCTS

Culture is a dynamic construct activated in response to human life. continually evolving tradition and convention, it is rooted in social, ethnic, and heritage accumulated lifestyle. Culture affects every aspect of life. Different types of geographical and cultural heritages produce valuable and intangible assets. In a borderless world, local culture and

traditional values become more important in the accelerated process of globalization. People gradually understand that embracing their own culture is important.

In the past, people produced tools for their domestic needs. Today, designers observe users'/customers' needs, then create products they can use for their daily needs. Design is firmly embedded in culture. Through design, people's needs are satisfied. However, in this paper, we emphasize the term "cultural products", which refer to a UNESCO definition, which states that "the specificity of cultural goods and services, which, as vectors of identity, values, and meaning, must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods" (UNESCO, 2011).

Cultural factors in design, using appropriate technologies in a social context, do not only make life convenient, but also make better use of culture as a source of innovation (Moalosi, Popovic, Hudson, and Kumar, 2005). More than ever, cultural factors provide stories for creating cultural emotional experiences. Local stories shape people's attitudes into interactions in a cultural context, such as communication, understanding, memories, and learning. Hence, cultural image, identity, and meanings are embedded in an individual's mind. Therefore, they offer an opportunity for designers to create certain emotional connection between cultural commodities and users/customers. We thus attempted to use cultural products to explore their influences in the cultural marketing of a city.

2.2 CULTURAL MARKETING AND HERITAGE

Kotler, Haider, and Rein proposed "place marketing" strategy after their empirical study in 1993 on inter-city competitions all over the world. The strategy suggests that we look at a city as a market-oriented business and then introduce the marketing concept in city governance. To integrate visual and invisible commodities in a city through marketing strategy, we may consider that city's future development as a "product", which promotes its image and brand to meet potential customer's needs via SWOT analysis. In other words, cities can be viewed as spatially extended products and can compete with each other in a way that is similar to competition between products. As such, cities should be treated as "products" to be marketed through tourism and branding activities. Thereafter, we hope to promote a city's development and strengthen its competitiveness ability. Paddison (1999) stated that marketing raises a city's competitive ability, attracting inward investment and promoting people's welfare as its goal, rather than making money through private enterprises. Ashworth and Voodg (1990) thought that city marketing might design local activities into consumer-related needs and benefits, maximizing social and economic efficiency and meet local development goals. In summary, Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) viewed a city as a kind of industry, with its future as its product. Its ultimate goal is to satisfy the market needs of industries, investors, local residents, and tourists by improving the product, thereby strengthening local economy, stimulating industry growth, and creating attraction or interest to the locality. Kotler, Haider, and Rein (1993) said that the four key elements of a city's cultural marketing strategy are (1) the image of a city, (2) local characteristics, (3) infrastructure construction, and (4) marketing using a celebrity.

According to the concepts of place marketing depicted above, we suggest that historical heritage can be used to construct an important cultural image of the city. We view it as “one product”, analyze its visual and invisible historic-cultural contents, and utilize “events marketing” approaches.

In this paper, cultural and heritage images refer to a strategy that presents a building with identifiable images and a tool that conveys a building’s core values. The building’s identity is a complex spatial patterns and its socio-cultural values. The cultural products in this research synthesize various attributes and transform them into a unique and irreplaceable product identity for marketing.

2.3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE FORMER TAINAN STATE MAGISTRATE RESIDENCE

During the Japanese colonial period (1895-1945), with the Japanese government’s industry policy and infrastructure construction in Taiwan, many settlements became prosperous cities. Inasmuch as the Japanese government was Westernized during the Meiji period, Western urban planning was introduced into Taiwan. During this time, especially in 1920 (Da-Cheng’s 9th year), the Japanese government used the City-Block Improvement Plan (city planning) and re-delineated five states, with Tainan City as administrative center of the entire Tainan State. The former Tainan State Hall and the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence were then built.

The former Tainan State Magistrate Residence was constructed in 1900 (Meiji’s 33rd year). It included two buildings. One had two floors, Western, with red-bricked walls, and many beautiful arched corridors. The building was known as the “Bell Tower” (Figure 1). The other was a Japanese-type structure. It was a Japanese-Western mixed style of architecture seldom seen during that time. It has been a precious building from the Japanese colonial period up to the present.

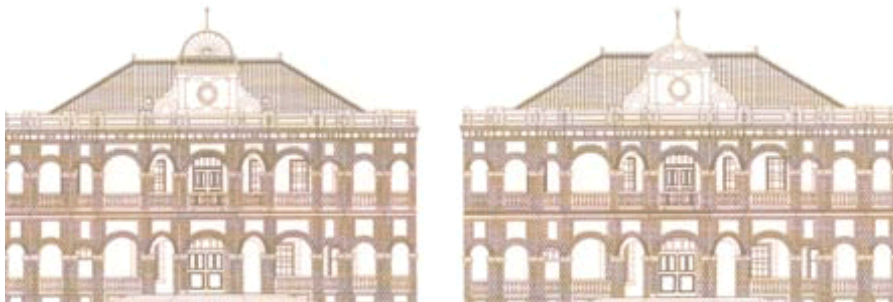


Figure 1. First- and Second-Generation building, the Bell Tower

Stage	Years	Period	Functions of Building
Stage 1	1900–1901	Tainan County period	Tainan County Magistrate Residence (今井良一の官邸)
Stage 2	1901–1920	Tainan T’ing Administration period	Taiwan Governor-General’s Residence in Tainan (兒玉源太郎); Japanese Royal Family’s Temporary Residence

Stage 3	1920-1945	Tainan State period	Tainan State Magistrate Residence (枝徳二の官邸) (Figure 7); Taiwan Governor-General's Residence in Tainan; Japanese Royal Family's Temporary Residence. 裕仁皇太子 lived here in 20 April 1923, saw and enjoyed Taiwanese fighting skills performance, and summoned fourteen persons who contributed to the Tainan State (Figures 8 and 9).
Stage 4	1945–2000	Post-WW II until the Kuo-Min Government and 2000	Many government agencies used it as Taiwan Salt Company police station, Militiaman command center. Soldiers, government employees, and teachers used it as a welfare shopping center.
Stage 5	After 2000		The Tainan City Government has registered it as a city-level historic heritage site and has completed its restoration, including a re-use study and a draft plan (Figure 10).

Figure 2. Five stages of Functional Change of the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence

The building has three unique attributes, which are not only symbolic. We can also construct the city's image and brand through them. These symbolic meanings are emphasized in the paper.

1. It is a Western type with red-bricked walls and many beautiful arched corridors, eight-angled shape façade between its center and two sides. The locals called it "The House of Arched Corridors". It was the highest and the largest building in Tainan during that time. It was also the highest official residence of the Japanese in southern Taiwan.

2. Dong-Cha (munahuda, one wooden board is nailed on the main beam or center of a house as a prayer of good wishes for the house owner) is the earliest form of Japanese architecture in all Taiwan at present. It should be preserved and considered a national treasure (Figures 11 and 12).

3. It was a bomb shelter that survived during the Japanese period and is the largest in Tainan City.

2.4 Summary

From 1994, the Council of Cultural Affairs (CCA) has started working on the construction of central government-funded local soft- and hard-ware cultural facilities, encouraging the participation of local residents. These policy approaches have combined "Revitalization of Historical Heritage and Traditional Districts" and "Community Empowerment Projects" together in practice, to the extent that they are accepted by most local governments, local residents, and organizations, thereby becoming popular policy tools in Taiwan in recent years. According to the currently funded projects (Hwang Bin, 2002; Lu Yuan Hua, 2006), the Tainan City government may market the place as the "Tainan Magistrate Residence Cultural Zone" in the near future. To impress culture on the youth, we may have to develop cultural products, which may help create marketing influences of the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence.

3. THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research can be generated using four processes (Figure 3), namely, (1) defining research questions; (2) developing research methods; (3) data collection and analysis; and (4) developing a cultural-product design project and prototype testing. The final outcomes could reveal the importance of developing a cultural product for city marketing (Figure 3).

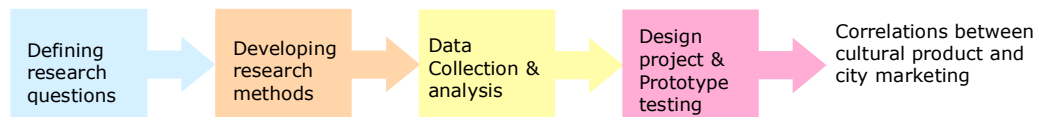


Figure 3. The major process of this research

Stage 1. To define the research problem, the primary research methods employed in this study included a review of existing literature, field survey, collection and content analysis of old photos, as well as a panel discussion with scholars, government officials, professionals, and local residents. We concluded our study and decided to have an empirical design project with student participants to understand potential tourists' thoughts and feelings. We selected young students (20-25 age average) as participants because (1) the young students are the target group which had high potentials as site tourists; (2) the students selected were also local residents, who did not have much knowledge of this cultural heritage (most of them never heard of this site, even though they often played near it); and (3) this site is located near the city center and near convenient means of transportation. The area is bustling with economic activities and is near shopping districts, where young tourists like to visit. Therefore, the city government may market the place as "Tainan Magistrate Residence Cultural Zone" in the near future. Therefore, we invited students to participate to understand the younger generation's interests in terms of the city image and culture.

Stage 2. In this stage, we conducted a one-day cultural learning tour at the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence. There were 61 students, whose age average was 20-25. We then interviewed each student and asked for his impression of the site. The art of coding and decoding was used to describe the respondents' thoughts. Synthesizing the findings, we filtered out the distinct cultural features of the site and used the interpreted data to develop a design model for cultural products to represent the residence.

Stage 3. After the preceding stage, three distinct images of the site often came out in the discussions with the 61 student participants, namely, (1) Dong-Cha amulet, (2) clock tower, and (3) figures in historical events that happened in the site, especially the Song Jiang Battle. We have a designer group, including four design students who are familiar with the site's background, that helped us in this project. After brainstorming and the design process, three product prototypes were produced. To understand whether the usability of such cultural

products was important, we also created other prototypes relative to the three objects, namely, (1) a bookmark formed using Dong-Cha style, (2) an alarm clock with a clock tower look, and (3) toy figures depicting the Song Jiang Battle. Product usability was hypothesized to attract visitors to buy something useful because we questioned if it was important or not. Therefore, a test was conducted to collect participants' responses about the connection between cultural products and city marketing.

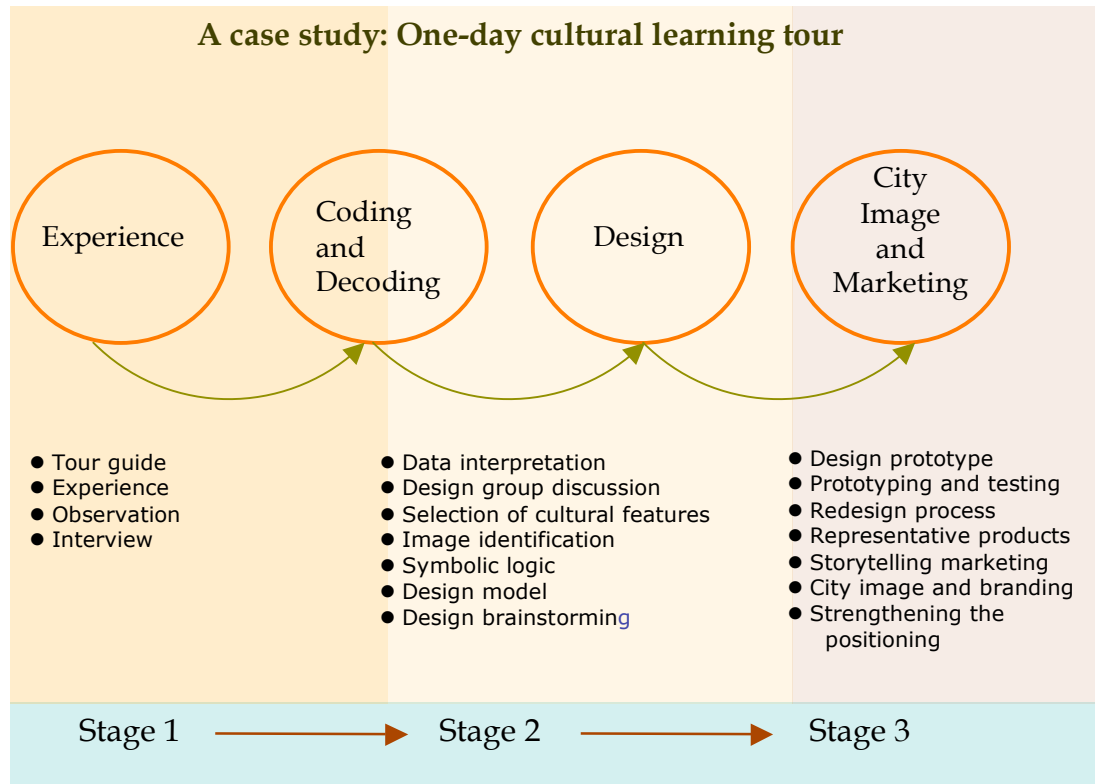


Figure 4. A case study: one-day cultural learning tour

In the three stages, we researched on city marketing potentials through cultural products. The research outcomes are discussed in the next section.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We present the results obtained from the above described process and analyses. The discussions here show our research objectives.

4.1 CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CITY IMAGE

The heritage of the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence is embedded in Tainan history. It is not only part of history, but is also one of the city’s symbols. Cities have increasingly attempted to compete with each other for regional attention, business investments, visitors, and talents in this era of global competition. These historical features have renewed a city’s industrial potentials.

According to Vanolo (2008), the symbolic construction of a city’s image is usually analyzed from two different perspectives, namely, internal image and external image. Internal image is more concrete and more easily identified through local sceneries and landmarks. External image is relatively vague and has an abstract and simplistic value (including positive or negative values) in unfamiliar and unexplored cities. Based on Vanolo’s (2008) perspective, the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence is a cultural and historical heritage being a city landmark of Tainan (Figure 3). It also reflects the lifestyle of the Japanese imperial family and its elegant aura of nobility. From the architectural style to the building materials used, it is an accurate record of Tainan history.

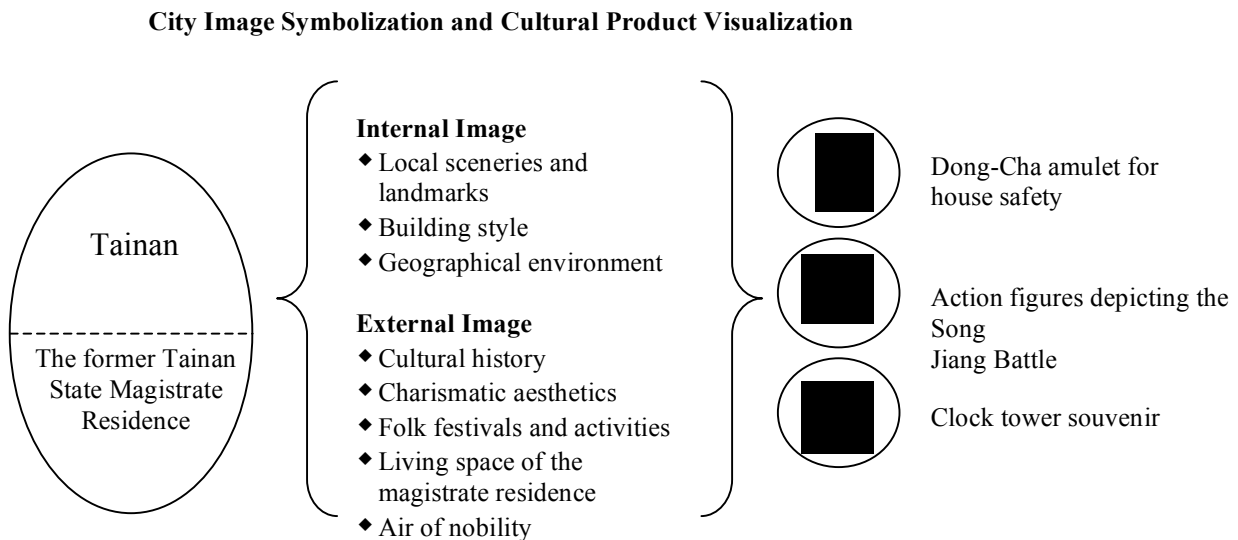


Figure 5. Methods of analyzing Tainan City through an image interpretation process and a city marketing strategy

Figure 5 lists internal and external images of Tainan city and attempts to structure the impressive image of the city. In showing how to apply image symbolism and historical meaning transformation, Figure 6 uses symbols or signifiers to interpret the concept of Tainan City. In this study, we first generated three distinct products to understand the connections between city images and cultural heritages. Through design process, cultural features can be interpreted into visible communication media, such as cultural artifacts, city’s official website, urban furniture, uniform, public transport, official buildings, and public areas. Cultural features have an inherent storytelling ability that presents regional culture. A successful city image, which is a key reference for its

inhabitants and is a sense of regional identity and belongingness, ensures a positive attitude towards the surroundings. It is also serves as a means for tourists to form a concrete idea of the city in their minds, encouraging them to visit the city again. This can help maintain a sustainable tourism industry.

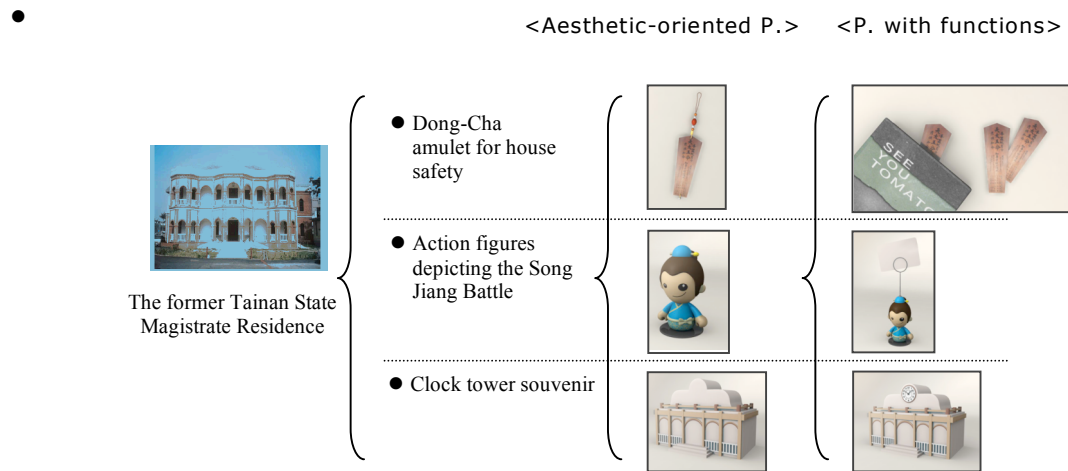


Figure 6. Image identification and cultural product design of the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence. Three products are aesthetic oriented, whereas three others are concerned with how to approach customers.

4.2 FROM A DESIGN STRATEGY TO A CULTURAL PRODUCT

In building a sense of identity, people can certainly relate to a city image that is not only about a shared cultural and emotional vision, but is also a strong economic, travel, business, or public link. In the development of emotional connection with regional culture, designing a creative cultural product has become popular in promoting regional culture. Cultural analysis and the creative designing of a product for daily use can support business marketing for regional culture. A cultural product sharing the city identity to attract tourists or other potential customers provides a marketing channel for the regional culture to communicate with people who are interested in exploring traditional cultures and cultural meanings. The following cultural products: (1) Dong-Cha amulet, (2) clock tower and, (3) toy Figures depicting the historical event of the site successfully transform cultural symbolism and represent a part of Tainan City's history. The cultural products are not just products. They represent historical accounts and develop the potentials of city marketing through storytelling. The usability of cultural products is not always necessary, but shows a purchase interest. Based on the positive responses of the respondents, we can understand a cultural product could be a vehicle for sharing, experiencing, learning, and recording culture because it is easy to approach and to be understood by people. Through action-purchase, visitors record their experiences using cultural products.

4.3 RELATIONS BETWEEN CULTURAL PRODUCT AND OTHER PLACES IN TAINAN CITY

The former Tainan State Magistrate Residence presented an elegant air of Japanese nobility in the past. Today, it has potentials of becoming a reprehensive Tainan site. Inasmuch as the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence does not belong to any cultural zone of Tainan City, therefore its cultural products are more novel and more attractive to visitors. There are some eminent images of other cultural zones (e.g., the Confucius Temple, the Chi-Kan Tower, the Anping Fort, etc.), including building type, handicraft articles, and unique local culture. We may thus design a set of cultural tourism schedules, which can integrate the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence and other cultural zones.

The unique symbolic heritage of the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence is concretely highlighted by its Western-style building with red brick walls, the Dong-Cha, and the bomb shelter during the Japanese period, which are all internal images. The external images of the historical rerecording of life in the official residence and the elegant air of nobility make up the structure of the past residents' values, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes, creating a proper city branding strategy for marketing. Through creative strategy, with a focus on tourism, the cultural products, namely, (1) images depicting the Song Jiang Battle, (2) Dong-Cha amulet for house safety, and (3) clock tower souvenir (Figure 6), building a city image and brand, which is an evolving tactic linked to various aspects of regional economics, culture, social identity, and public interest. In future research, we will explore the relationship between city branding and cultural products in regional development.

5. Conclusion

This paper adopts Vanolo's (2008) perspective, incorporating into Tainan's image the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence and developing cultural products. We hope that this becomes useful to conservation designers, urban planners, and policy makers in Tainan City because it considers historical heritage re-use as an efficient tool for urban regeneration. This is an important contribution at the urban planning and cultural marketing practice level. Then, we formulate a comprehensive process of symbolization and visualization, which can become an analytical framework for cultural product design strategy. This is a contribution at the theoretical level. The methods are designed to develop cultural products that are appropriate for marketing the former Tainan State Magistrate Residence as a creative cultural park. The specific effect of these representative products is intended as a cultural promotion vehicle to communicate local history to residents and potential tourists. Further, the products can enable the construction of the symbolic features of the Residence. The area has been promoted as an official cultural zone in Tainan City and even in the entire Taiwan. Emphasizing the elegant lifestyle of formal residency living and that of the nobility through creative design and image making can expand its public appeal. Finally, the distinctiveness of the Residence is defined in terms of its character and tradition, especially how it is used spatially and socially, as well as how it is embedded within the context of the local culture.

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