

# *Exploration of the Transformational Design of Mount Tai Cultural Intellectual Property (IP) Image*

**Kai Wang, Qingzhi Zhu**

*Taishan University, Taian, 271000, China*

**Keywords:** Cultural and tourism, Mount Tai, culture, IP image

**Abstract:** Mount Tai, with its long history and rich cultural heritage, is China's first dual heritage site of culture and nature. With the trend of cultural and tourism integration and the booming cultural and intellectual property (IP) industry, Mount Tai culture urgently requires IP image development. This paper, by reviewing Mount Tai's cultural resources, explores the patterns of transforming Mount Tai culture into IP images, aiming to provide a research basis for the transformation of IP images of other cultural and tourism resources and to better promote the development of the cultural and tourism industry.

Since the concept of IP emerged in the cultural and entertainment industry, China's IP economy has experienced rapid development for many years. IP originally stands for "Intellectual Property," which refers to the ownership of knowledge or intellectual assets. Today, this concept has been enriched and expanded in China, and "IP" refers to cultural resources that have a fan base and content value and can develop into a long-lasting derivative industry chain.[1]

The present is an opportune period for the rapid development of the IP industry, and the era of super IPs has arrived. IP economy, with IP development as its core and fan economy as its essence, has gradually become a new development model. The popularity of the IP economy has penetrated into the cultural and tourism industry, giving rise to various scenic area IP images, city IP images, and more. From the "Flower Ying Shanquan Family" IP image of Huixian Flower Reflection Three Springs Scenic Area to the "Five Little Blessings" IP image of Wugongshan Scenic Area in Jiangxi, from the "Tang Niang" IP image of the Shaanxi History Museum to the "Lu Ke" IP image of Xiamen. IP images have become a new requirement and standard for the integration of culture and tourism development. A good IP image can enhance the brand's strong realization and emotional affinity in cultural tourism.[2]

Mount Tai is regarded as a symbol of the Chinese nation's spirit and a microcosm of Chinese historical and cultural development. Mount Tai culture holds a significant position in the cultural domain. In the context of cultural and tourism integration, how to review Mount Tai's cultural resources and transform them into Mount Tai culture IP images is a major issue we must address in contemporary times.

## **1. Cultural Resource Advantages of Mount Tai Culture IP Image**

Mount Tai is the world's first dual heritage of culture and nature, and it represents a unique cultural advantage for the development of cultural tourism and IP industrialization due to its multiple facets

as a natural mountain, religious mountain, folk mountain, cultural mountain, and spiritual mountain. Given that the cultural and tourism industry requires both commercial and cultural value, the main cultural resources are as follows:

### **1.1. Enthronement Culture**

The enthronement ceremony is the most important function of Mount Tai and the initial driving force behind the formation of its historical and cultural significance. The "Emperor," who was considered as having "divine authority," regarded Mount Tai as a symbol of national unity and imperial power. To show gratitude for the "mandate" from the Heavenly Emperor, they performed the enthronement ceremony on Mount Tai. In ancient times, the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors conducted celestial rituals on Mount Tai. Historical records show that many emperors in history made sacrifices and left inscriptions of merit on Mount Tai, with a total of 27 imperial enthronement ceremonies from the Qin and Han dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties.[3]

### **1.2. Mythological Culture**

The folklore and legends related to Mount Tai are extremely rich, featuring stories such as the creation of Mount Tai by Pangu, the governance of human souls by the Eastern Peak Emperor, the heavenly fairies and goddesses like Mount Tai's Goddess of Azure Clouds, and the demon-slaying hero Mount Tai's Shigandang. These myths and legends reflect the aspirations of the laboring people for a better life and their desire to combat evil and promote goodness, and they have been widely passed down.

### **1.3. Literary and Artistic Culture**

Literary and artistic cultural resources associated with Mount Tai include poems, essays, novels, and stone inscriptions. Throughout history, Mount Tai, as a cultural symbol, has attracted writings from renowned cultural figures. Notable examples include Sima Xiangru's "Enthronement Ode" and Du Fu's "Gazing at Mount Tai." Mount Tai's stone inscriptions, a unique form of Chinese culture, are grand in scale, elegant in taste, and rich in content. Mount Tai's stone inscriptions are the most numerous among China's famous mountains, with over 9,000 sites historically and 2,516 extant sites, including more than 500 stone inscriptions and over 800 cliff inscriptions.

### **1.4. Specialty Cultural Resources**

Specialty cultural resources are an important source of revenue in traditional tourism and a revenue point requiring innovative packaging and upgrading in the cultural tourism industry under the IP economy. Mount Tai, located in central Shandong, has a diverse range of specialty products due to its complex geological structure, climate, and unique animal and plant resources, as well as mineral resources. Notable specialty products from Mount Tai and its surrounding areas include the four famous Mount Tai medicinal herbs (Ganoderma lucidum, ginseng, Polygonum multiflorum, and Ophiopogon japonicus), Mount Tai's Daughter Tea, Mount Tai chestnuts, Taian tofu, Mount Tai stone, Mount Tai jade, and Feicheng peaches, among others.

### **1.5. Culinary Culture**

"Food is the people's livelihood," and culinary culture is an essential tourism resource. Tasting local cuisine has become a significant part of tourism and holds great economic importance for the

development of tourism destinations. It mainly includes Mount Tai tofu banquets, Mount Tai medicinal herb banquets, Mount Tai wild vegetable banquets, Mount Tai red-scaled fish, Taian's "Three Beauties," Mount Tai pancakes, Fanzhen roasted buns, and Dongping porridge, among others.

## 1.6. Landscape Culture

As a 5A-level scenic area, Mount Tai combines natural and cultural landscapes, including the secluded area, vast area, profound area, marvelous area, exquisite area, and beautiful area, forming a three-tiered space of "Earthly Realm," "Human Realm," and "Heavenly Realm." It features famous historical sites and scenic spots such as the Dai Temple, South Heavenly Gate, Wangmu Pool, Yuquan Temple, Cloud-Stepping Bridge, Jade Emperor Peak, Moon-viewing Peak, Taohuayu Valley, Shanziyan, and Tianzhufeng, as well as numerous ancient trees. Additionally, Mount Tai is known for its four great wonders: Mount Tai's sunrise, sea of clouds with a jade disc, evening glow and sunset glow, and the golden belt of the Yellow River.

Because the scope of cultural resources is extensive and complex, there is no unified classification standard in academia. Some cultural resources are challenging to categorize distinctly, resulting in a situation where various cultural resources blend together.

## 2. Transformation of Mount Tai Culture IP Image

In recent years, many scenic areas, projects, and cities have embarked on the development of cultural tourism IP images to promote the tourism industry and create IP industrial chains. Examples include the "Lele Friends" IP image of the Leshan Giant Buddha cultural tourism brand, the "Mengxi Family" IP image of Xishuangbanna, the "Huaying Shanquan Family" IP image of Huixian Huayingshanquan Scenic Area, and the "Wu Xiao Fu" IP image of the Wugong Mountain Scenic Area in Jiangxi. Based on the analysis and research of the creation of these cultural tourism IP images, the author has summarized certain patterns to be followed when developing and transforming cultural tourism IP images, referred to as the Cultural Tourism IP Image Transformation Model, as shown in Figure 1. Combining this with the earlier analysis of Mount Tai's cultural resources, the transformation of Mount Tai's cultural IP image should consider the following points:

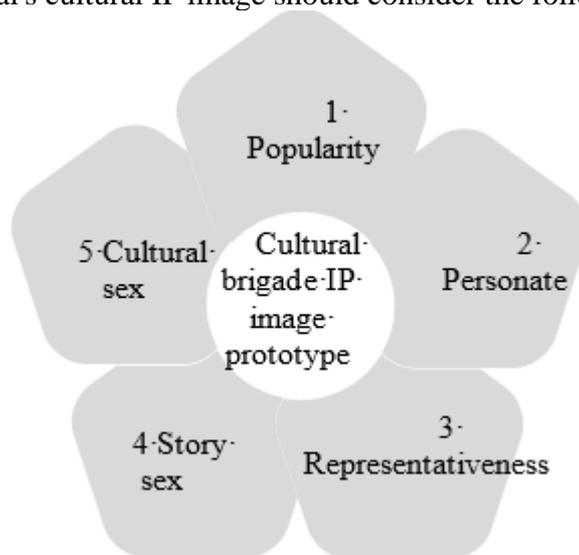


Figure 1: Cultural and tourism IP image transformation model

## 2.1. Prominence

The prototypes for IP image transformation are generally things with relatively high prominence. This makes it easier to disseminate the IP image, reduces communication costs, and increases public acceptance of the IP image. From an offline perspective, the IP image can also enhance the prominence of the original prototype itself. For example, in the case of the "Lele Friends" IP image of the Leshan Giant Buddha cultural tourism brand, "Cilele" is derived from the Leshan Giant Buddha, which is the most prominent tourist attraction within the 5A-level tourist scenic area and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. "Cilele's" image and promotion have further increased the visibility of the Leshan Giant Buddha. Among Mount Tai's cultural resources, highly prominent cultural resources include landscape culture, mythological culture, religious culture, and enthronement culture. Notably, "Mount Tai's Goddess of Azure Clouds" and "Mount Tai's Shigandang" have high visibility both domestically and internationally.

## 2.2. Personification

Personification is the most basic characteristic of IP images. The prototypes for IP image transformation are generally entities such as characters, animals, or plants that can undergo visual transformation. For example, "Cilele" is derived from the Leshan Giant Buddha, and "Tangniu" is inspired by the Tang Dynasty female figurines, which are artifacts with human-like features, making them suitable for personification. Research has shown that in images, human figures attract the most attention, followed by animals and plants. Personifying the image not only increases its visual appeal but also enhances its affinity, making it easier to gain emotional recognition from the audience. Therefore, when selecting a prototype for IP image transformation, entities with human, animal, or plant-like features should be preferred. In accordance with the requirements of personification, cultural resources in Mount Tai with personification characteristics primarily include mythological culture, religious culture, enthronement culture, and specialty culture. Specifically, many mythological figures fall into the category of mythological culture, while landscape culture often involves natural landscapes and structures, which have limited personification potential.

## 2.3. Representativeness

In the cultural tourism industry, representativeness means that the prototype for the IP image is generally a representative, typical, or unique entity. For example, the "Lu Ke" IP image in Xiamen, known as "Luka," is based on the white egret. Since Xiamen Island is a habitat for white egrets and is also known as "Egret Island," using the white egret as a representative bird is highly appropriate. When transforming an IP image, selecting prototypes that are representative or unique can significantly enhance the connection and symbolism between the IP image and the scenic area or brand itself, as well as increase differentiation from other IP images. The prototype for "Cilele" in the "Lele Friends" IP image of the Leshan Giant Buddha cultural tourism brand is the Leshan Giant Buddha itself, which is a unique and landmark cultural relic within the scenic area, making it highly representative. In Mount Tai's cultural resources, representative cultural resources mainly include landscape culture, enthronement culture, mythological culture, and specialty culture. For example, "Mount Tai's Goddess of Azure Clouds," "Mount Tai's Shigandang," and other figures unique to Mount Tai are highly representative.

## 2.4. Storytelling

A good story is a necessary condition for a successful IP. A compelling story shapes a compelling

image. Characters like Sun Wukong from "Journey to the West" and Nezha from "Nezha Conquers the Dragon King" resonate with people because of the stories associated with them. In the creation of IP images, character development often precedes the development of specific stories. This is because many IP prototypes do not inherently have stories or are not born from stories. For example, "Hua Hua" in the "Huaying Shanquan Family" IP image of the Huixian Huayingshanquan Scenic Area is based on the flower sea landscape, which is a man-made landscape lacking historical and cultural storytelling depth. In such cases, stories need to be created. However, in the cultural tourism industry, many IP prototypes already possess inherent storytelling or historical and cultural significance, especially those related to human history and culture. The unique historical, cultural, and legendary stories associated with cultural tourism provide a significant advantage for IP image development. Mount Tai has a history of over five millennia of Chinese civilization, and it is associated with countless stories. Among its cultural resources, mythological culture, religious culture, enthronement culture, and literary and artistic culture all contain storytelling elements. Among these, mythological figures like "Mount Tai's Goddess of Azure Clouds" and "Mount Tai's Shigandang" offer significant storytelling potential. The story of Shigandang has even been adapted into television dramas, such as TVB's "The Mythical Arch" in 2006 and Shandong Satellite TV's "Shigandang: Hero of Mount Tai" in 2015.

## 2.5. Cultural Essence

The cultural essence is where the value of a cultural tourism IP image lies. A cultural tourism IP image serves as the visual carrier and representation of cultural essence. Therefore, the prototype for an IP image should possess a certain level of cultural essence and heritage, particularly for cultural tourism projects associated with human history and culture. In the current context of the integration of culture and tourism, exploring the cultural essence of tourism is crucial for enhancing the quality and enriching the content of tourism. Cultural essence is the core element of high-quality IP images. Using entities with deep cultural essence as prototypes for IP images not only inherits their cultural significance but also enhances the cultural value of the IP image, thereby increasing the competitive value of the cultural tourism IP brand. It also contributes to the inheritance, dissemination, and promotion of outstanding traditional culture. For example, the "Luka" IP image of the Leshan Giant Buddha cultural tourism brand is derived from the Leshan Giant Buddha, which was built during the Tang Dynasty, has a history of over 1,500 years, and serves as a symbol of Chinese Han Buddhism culture. However, not all cultural tourism IPs inherently possess strong cultural essence, especially those related to natural landscapes or man-made tourist attractions lacking historical depth. For instance, the "Hua Hua" character in the "Huaying Shanquan Family" IP image of Huixian Huayingshanquan Scenic Area is based on the flower sea landscape, which may have a weaker cultural background. Mount Tai, as a microcosm of Chinese culture, carries rich geographical, historical, and cultural heritage. Its cultural resources, including enthronement culture, religious culture, mythological culture, and artistic culture, have deep cultural essence advantages.

Additionally, through an analysis of the creation of some cultural tourism IP images, as shown in Table 1, it can be observed that many large-scale cultural tourism IP brands utilize a combination of multiple IP images. This is mainly because certain cultural tourism projects cover a wide range and have rich cultural resources, requiring different IP images to symbolize and promote different cultural resources and strengths. Due to the broad coverage and rich cultural resources of Mount Tai's cultural culture, a combination of multiple IP images may also be considered.

Based on the comprehensive analysis considering the five dimensions of prominence, personification, representativeness, storytelling, and cultural essence, Mount Tai's mythological cultural resources are the most suitable for IP image transformation. It boasts numerous mythological

figures, offering the highest potential value for IP image transformation. Mount Tai's mythological culture is particularly well-suited for a combination of multiple IP images. Specifically, figures like "Mount Tai's Goddess of Azure Clouds" and "Mount Tai's Shigandang" have gained widespread recognition and have stories that resonate domestically and internationally. They are also representative mythological characters of Mount Tai and are intertwined with other cultural resources such as enthronement culture, religious culture, literary and artistic culture, and specialty culture. Moreover, they carry the unique cultural essence of Mount Tai.

Table 1: Number table of cultural and travel IP images

Name	Number of IP images
Leshan Giant Buddha culture and tourism brand IP image "Le Le Friends"	5
Xishuangbanna IP image of Meng West family	3
Hui County IP image of Hua Ying Sanquan Scenic area "Hua Ying Mountain Spring family"	4
Jiangxi Ji'an Wugong Mountain scenic spot IP image "Five xiaofu"	5

Mount Tai is a profound treasure of Chinese national history and culture, with abundant cultural resources and immense research value. Conducting research on the IP image transformation of Mount Tai's culture can promote the development and construction of traditional Chinese cultural resources, providing theoretical guidance for the industrialization and image transformation of cultural heritage into IPs.

## References

- [1] Fan, T. Y. (2019). Analysis of the Definition of "IP" in the Contemporary Chinese Context. *Journal of Shaanxi Radio and TV University*, (21), 88-94.
- [2] Lv, J. X. (1990). On the Development of Folk Culture and Folk Tourism Resources in Mount Tai. *Folklore Research*, (15), 104-108.
- [3] Yang, H. J., & Hou, Z. Q. (2011). Reflections on the Development of Tai'an's Food Culture Tourism Resources. *Journal of TaiShan University*, (33), 100-104.