

## Article

# Transformation of the imagery of Taiwan's unique cultural elements into styling design

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**Abstract:** Designing cultural goods is meaningful in connecting experiences, memories, and emotions and evoking resonance. The design imbues cultural, historical, and national symbolic emotions with products. Such products induce people's psychological responses through sensory tension and a thematic atmosphere, stimulating consumers' desire to purchase. By exploring the imagery of Taiwan's unique cultural elements, we investigated how designed products expressed these elements, transforming them into tangible designs. We proposed the "Image Transformation Method" by (1) establishing unique image characteristics, (2) imaginative thinking, (3) strengthening associations, and (4) image transformation. The results help Designers have related concepts to translate cultural imagery into products effectively.

**Keywords:** Taiwanese culture, Cultural marketing, Cultural and creative industries, Product shape, Shape image, Product design

## 1. Introduction

Taiwan used to be famous for manufacturing and OEM industries, and the emphasis was put on products "Made in Taiwan". However, "Created in Taiwan" has become important nowadays. By harnessing uniqueness and originality, Taiwan seeks a creative industry based on early insights into consumers' needs and unparalleled value. Evolving from a hands-on economy, Taiwan is endeavoring to shift its focus from OEM manufacturing to the creative industry. Thus, it is important to get rid of past problems to secure efficiency, high quality, and low costs based on individuality and creative energy.

Creativity requires theoretical knowledge and practical skills with operational capabilities and hands-on experience. To cultivate a creative workforce, they need to be trained to have conceptual thinking and an ability to apply it and bridge the gap between ideas and real situations. They must understand market demands and customers to abstract concepts to find concrete solutions. Creativity is not merely an imaginative exercise but also an effective implementation tool. Creativity is inherent to an extent, manifesting diverse aspects of life. Creativity provides an original with significance which contributes to economic development when it is used practically and usefully (Feng, 2002). Creativity must not be arbitrary or devoid of purpose. It stems from the refinement of existing ideas or the addition of novel features. This process improves creativity that permeates all levels of thinking and behavior (Fu et al., 2003).

Based on the connection between design and consumption, products are imbued with cultural, historical, and national symbols (Li et al., 1999). The product design infuses these emotions into products by captivating experiences to resonate with consumers and stimulate their purchasing desire (Chen, 2005). However, designers tend to rely on individual imagination, creativity, and experience. While these qualities are instrumental in inspiration, methods to stimulate ideation and support the design process are lacking. Products must provide consumers with a sensual experience, which influences their purchasing decisions. Essentially, the image of a product communicates people's psychological perceptions. The image comprises multiple distinctive features (Zhang & Lin, 2009). Thus, designers must incorporate cultural characteristics and concepts into product design to convey the intended message to consumers effectively. Based on these, we introduced the "Image Transformation Shaping Method" to aid designers in conceptualizing designs. This method was used to infuse the cultural element into the product, thereby enabling consumers to resonate with the product.

## 2. Definitions

Zuoying's history traces back to the era of Zheng Chenggong 300 years ago and is a historical and cultural heritage. Located in North Kaohsiung and nestled between Guishan Mountain and Snake Mountain, Zuoying stands out as the most historical area in the city. It faces the Taiwan Strait to the west and has significant military fortresses. The area abounds with scenic spots and historic

sites, each evoking a sense of ancient times. From the Old City Gate and Chongsheng Temple to Xinglong Well, Zhenfu Society, Chenghuang Temple, and numerous ancient houses, Zuoying offers a glimpse into its illustrious past. The renowned Banping Mountain and Lianchitan are famous for their picturesque landscapes and fragrant lotus blooms. Due to its rich history, Zuoying has diverse cuisines, influenced by the blend of old and new tribes. The abundance of northern and southern delicacies attracts food enthusiasts, showcasing the area's culinary diversity. Zuoying's famous scenic spots include the Chunqiu Pavilion, Wuli Pavilion, and Dragon and Tiger Pagoda which are must-visit destinations for foreign tourists. With lotus ponds and greenery, these landmarks offer serene and captivating vistas. Additionally, the country's largest Confucius Temple exudes grandeur and elegance, providing visitors with a refreshing and satisfying experience.

The Dragon and Tiger Pagoda, constructed in 1976, stands as a symbol of good fortune with its distinctive architecture and intricate internal carvings. Owned by Tzu Chi Palace, the pagoda is connected to the picturesque Jiuqu Bridge, offering visitors a memorable experience. According to traditional Feng Shui, ancient Chinese beliefs, and the principles of geomancy, the green dragon is placed on the left of the white tiger. In ancient China, the majority of houses were oriented to the south with the north representing coldness and the element of water (Xuanwu) and the south symbolizing heat and the element of fire (Zhuque). Consequently, there is a Suzaku (a mythical bird representing fire) in the front and Xuanwu (a mythical creature representing water) in the back. As a result, in the east, the element of wood and the color green are placed in the domain of the green dragon, while in the west, the element of metal and the color white are found in the realm of the white tiger. This arrangement, often described as "green dragon on the left, white tiger on the right," is considered auspicious for protection and balance. Feng Shui practitioners believe the natural landscape between mountains, rivers, and other natural features creates a harmonious and protective environment akin to a mother's embrace around her child. The construction and layout of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda deviate from this traditional rule as temples and pagodas often incorporate symbolic elements and artistic interpretations that may not adhere strictly to Feng Shui principles. Nevertheless, the underlying symbolism of balance, protection, and auspiciousness remains a fundamental aspect of Feng Shui and sacred structures such as the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda.

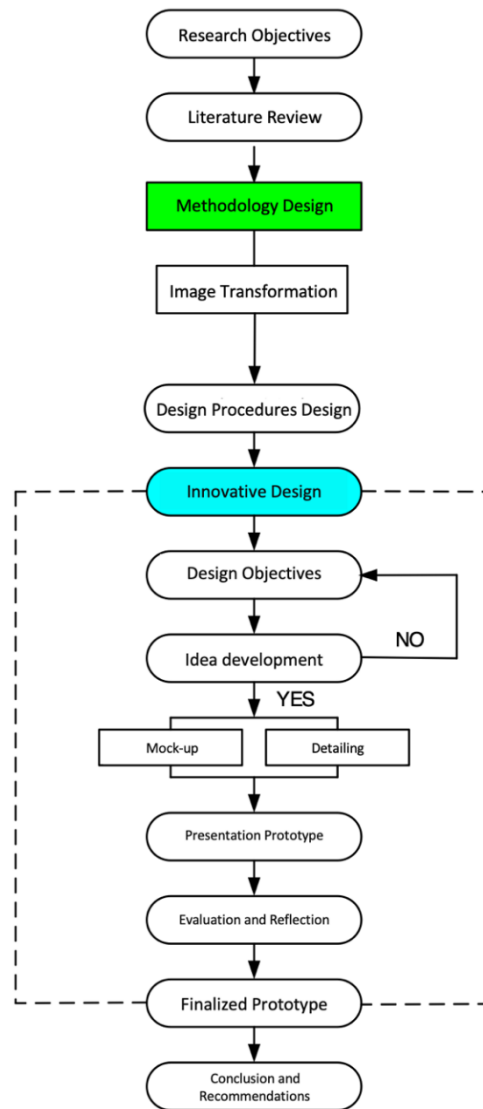
Design is an extension of lifestyle, knowledge, methods, and technologies, ultimately generating commodity value. In contemporary society, there is a growing demand for perceptual and spiritual goods, prompting designers to integrate people's preferences into the design process. This people-oriented approach enhances individuals' quality of life by integrating design into culture and daily life, identifying challenges, and expressing the true essence of design (Feng, 2002). The purpose of product design is to create valuable products. However, creativity in design does not necessarily entail inventing new products; rather, it offers people a fresh experience through conceptualization, performance, and visual presentation (Lin, 1987). Given that individuals primarily perceive objects through vision, akin to Berkeley's notion that "To be is to be perceived (*Esse est percipi*)", and people exhibit two key characteristics of visual perception.

First, individuals engage in "two-stage visual processing," wherein they initially scan the image to discern the pattern and target objects before shifting visual attention to its details and components. Second, the "depiction of initial impressions" of individuals depends on ambiguous or incomplete visual information. Consequently, people identify product images through feature and image identification. In essence, products possess characteristic imagery that emphasizes specific product elements, and overall imagery that necessitates the harmonization of all product elements in design decisions, thus presenting a greater challenge in accurate expression (Cai, 1994; Zhang & Lin, 2009). When an object captivates a viewer's interest and holds aesthetic appeal, the viewer becomes familiar with its form. However, objects comprise familiar and unfamiliar features, leading to complexity in perception, particularly for familiar aspects. Conversely, unfamiliar features, once accepted and understood, draw the viewer's attention (Zhang, 2003). Thus, familiarity with objects is rooted in existing memories, emotions, feelings, and experiences. Lee, Harada, and Akira (1998) argued that individuals refer to the most similar information in memory or experience and interpret new information accordingly.

We paid attention to the Dragon, Tiger Pagoda, and Lotus Pond as the central elements of a new cultural creation. By leveraging the distinctive appearance of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda and combining it with the functionality of a bookshelf, the pagoda was used as the primary design element. Drawing from the imagery evoked by the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda, a novel and unique bookshelf design was crafted with cultural commodity value.

### 3. Research Method

Through image transformation, the design goal of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda bookshelf was understood in this research. For satisfactory design results, systematic steps were established as a design process as shown in Fig. 1.



**Fig 1.** Research flow chart.

### 3.1 Design Process

We set up the design procedure for the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda bookshelf. Referring to the insights of Pahl and Beitz (1996) who proposed a systematic design procedure, we divided the design process into four stages (Lin, 1985).

1. **Planning and Clarifying the Design Task:** At this stage, the basic characteristics and requirements of the design object were collected to clarify the design task and establish design requirements. Design goals or specifications were established to define the solution space and evaluate solutions.
2. **Conceptual Design:** Necessary issues were identified, and functional structures were established at this stage. Solution principles were sought for each sub-function, and ideas were formulated by combining these principles. The feasibility of each sub-function solution was evaluated based on engineering and economic standards to develop a conceptual plan.
3. **Embodiment Design:** Preliminary drawings and styling designs were developed from the conceptual design. The best drawings were selected for technical and economic evaluation, and shortcomings were addressed to obtain preliminary design drawings. Modeling theory was optimized to refine the design pattern and check for errors and cost-effectiveness. A preliminary parts list and production documents were prepared to finalize the design pattern.
4. **Detail Design:** Design drawings were detailed and finalized, and the details and production documents were completed by reviewing documents for the design task.

Applying these design procedures to the cultural and creative product of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda, we planned and clarified the design tasks. Relevant literature was reviewed to investigate the characteristics and needs of the cultural and creative product. Design objectives and constraints were formulated, and a design specification was determined. Practical requirements were considered to determine the size of the Longhu Tower bookshelf, followed by drawings of the cultural and creative product. Component configuration in the detailed design stage was finalized by detailing the dimensions of each component based on the design results. Finally, dimension drawings and combination diagrams were produced. The design was then transformed into a physical model.

### 3.2 Investigation Method

The existing products displayed in the store were photographed in field surveys. Additionally, an online questionnaire survey was conducted to investigate the perceptions and impressions of Lianchitan and interest levels and preferences regarding product classification on purchasing intentions for cultural products.

#### 3.2.1 Field Survey

Fieldwork, originating from cultural anthropology and archaeology, constitutes a fundamental research methodology characterized by the practice and application of the "direct observation method" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). It is an essential preliminary step to gather first-hand original data for further research. Initially denoted as "field study" or "field research," the term "field research" or "fieldwork" encompasses all on-site investigative and research endeavors across various disciplines, including linguistics, archaeology, ethnology, anthropology, literature, philosophy, art, and folklore. Through the collection and documentation of field data, a new research system with theoretical backgrounds is established to render field investigation as an indispensable auxiliary process. Fieldwork entails on-site recording and work, with the recorded results transformed into research outcomes for analysis and presentation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). On-site interviews and records obtained from field surveys serve as primary sources of valuable information. The most common types of data collection in fieldwork include the following.

1. Interview: Video and audio recordings are obtained in interviews, demonstrations, or performances. Recordings are transcribed and researched, constituting the most authentic records of field interviews.
2. Photographs: First-hand images and photographic data are collected on-site, documenting ancient buildings, settlements, artworks, or significant figures. They are used in field documentary articles as visual information (Rose, 2016).
3. Reproduction: With the consent of the original collector, ancestral genealogies, ancient books, drawings, scripts, genealogy examples, secrets, or old photographs are reproduced as fundamental materials for future research.
4. Surveying and Mapping: The dimensions of artworks are measured and recorded with diagrams or drawings using simulation methods to provide data and visuals for data collection and simulations (Bernard, 2017).

## 4. Product Design Strategy

Research on the cultural creativeness of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda, prominent landmarks in Taiwan was conducted to unveil its cultural significance in attracting visitors. Inspired by this iconic site, diverse cultural and creative products have been developed to captivate tourists. By crafting exquisite models accompanied by historical background introductions, tourists can buy souvenirs and Feng Shui artifacts. Designer-style apparel and hats show unique patterns or texts of the Pagoda's distinctive style. Additionally, themed tea gift boxes allow tourists to experience local tea culture, while compiled books detail the Pagoda's history, legends and culture serve as valuable resources. Souvenirs such as snacks or candies are wrapped and packaged inspired by the Pagoda, offering tourists memorable keepsakes. These products are available in local tourist centers, boutiques, and online platforms, enticing visitors to buy them as cherished mementos or gifts. Through such endeavors, the cultural and creative promotion of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda enriches the visitor experience and contributes to the preservation and appreciation of local heritage.

### 4.1 Design Concept



Inspired by the rich cultural significance and architectural beauty of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda, a design concept was proposed in this research to capture the essence of this iconic landmark while incorporating elements, resonate with visitors' memories, and promote the cultural heritage of the Lianchitan area. In the design, the concepts of cultural symbols, architectural features, travel memory, and promotion of culture were employed as key development characteristics. We incorporated the symbolic meanings of dragons and tigers in Chinese culture to convey their power, auspiciousness, strength, and might. Elements such as the intricate scales of the dragon and the fierce gaze of the tiger were woven into product motifs to reflect the cultural significance of

the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda. Additionally, architectural features were included as a primary inspiration for the design. Intricate details and designs from the tower were translated into the aesthetics of products to showcase its unique beauty and artistic value. Models of the pagoda and crafted handicrafts showed homage to the architectural grandeur of this iconic structure.




The memory of travel and experiences is represented in the realm of creative development. The proposed design in this study evoked nostalgic memories of visitors to Lotus Pond. Products such as souvenirs and keepsakes capture the essence of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda as tangible reminders of visitors' emotions to this scenic spot. Each design element was meticulously crafted to resonate with visitors' experiences and memories of Lotus Pond. Based on product development, the promotion of culture was mostly overlooked though it was the most crucial aspect. Through the development of cultural and creative products, the rich cultural heritage of the Lianchitan area appealed to more audiences. Products featuring dragon and tiger themes are ambassadors for Lianchitan's history and characteristics, allowing people to appreciate its cultural significance. By showcasing the charm and cultural value of the Lianchitan area, the design fostered greater appreciation and understanding.

At the Longhu Tower Cultural and Creative Commodity Campus, culture and creativity are boundless sources of inspiration. The Dragon Tiger Tower, a significant landmark in Taiwan boasts a long-standing history carrying a profound cultural background and significance. Thus, the integration of the elements of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda into cultural and creative products helps to understand and appreciate its history and culture and nurture designers' creativity and independent thinking. The cultural and creative products inspired by the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda encompass a diverse range, including writing pens, T-shirts, stationery, and various other items. These features show distinctive designs and incorporate the symbolic elements of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda including the patterns of dragon and tiger and stone carvings, imbuing them with personality and rich culture. For designers in Taiwan, these cultural and creative products transcend mere practicality in daily life; they are expressions of personal identity. The uniquely designed products reflect Taiwan's cultural essence showcasing its distinctiveness to the global audience. These products have sparked creativity and imagination across Taiwan with designs of the unique rhythm of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda. This results in diverse personalities and provides Taiwan with a way to express itself by articulating its ideas and perspectives and cultivating independent thinking. The cultural and creative products inspired by the Dragon Tiger Tower are guidelines in Taiwan with homage to its culture and creativity. These products present Taiwanese culture and nurture students' creativity and independent thinking. The cultural and creative products of the Dragon Tiger Tower must be embraced as the unique charm of Taiwan. This study developed five forms of creative desk lamps based on the elements of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Products with Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda.

Name	Product	Description
Liu Li 1		Dragon and Tiger Pagoda cultural and creative products 1
Liu Li 2		Dragon and Tiger Pagoda cultural and creative products 2



<p>Liu Li 3</p>		<p>Dragon and Tiger Pagoda cultural and creative products 3</p>
<p>Liu Li 4</p>		<p>Dragon and Tiger Pagoda cultural and creative products 4</p>
<p>Liu Li 5</p>		<p>Dragon and Tiger Pagoda cultural and creative products 5</p>

#### 4.2 Purpose and Strategy

The objective of this research was to enhance the visibility and cultural significance of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda by promoting its cultural and creative products. By leveraging its symbolic importance in Chinese culture, its cultural inheritance can be continued and reach more audiences with its essence. These products yield substantial economic benefits by growing related industries and boosting the local economy. As a tourist destination, the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda's cultural and creative characteristics enrich visitors' experiences which lead to prolonging their stays and increased revenue. This multifaceted approach underscores the potential for cultural promotion and cultural confidence.

The Longhu Tower's cultural and creative products correspond to the prominence and cultural significance of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda. By identifying representative cultural products such as hand-painted postcards, T-shirts, bookmarks, and ceramic accessories, such products reflect the characteristics and cultural essence of the Pagoda. Through design optimization, innovative elements can be integrated with the Pagoda's authentic essence preserved to enhance aesthetic and cultural value. Collaboration with local authorities enables exhibitions to showcase the allure of Longhu Tower's products and attract more audiences with cultural appreciation. Multi-channel distribution strategies, including tourist destinations, cultural markets, and online platforms, amplify the beauty of Longhu Tower's products and allow for more accessibility and consumer engagement. A Brand establishment with focused packaging and promotion cultivates a strong image and enhances recognition and reputation. Continuous product diversification based on market demand ensures relevance and appeal to diverse consumer preferences. The establishment of an online community on social media platforms is required to facilitate consumer engagement, user-generated content, and loyalty, while collaborative partnerships with related institutions and scenic spots increase overall influence and cultural promotion efforts.

Through these strategic endeavors, the awareness and perception of the Dragon and Tiger Pagoda can be increased, and foster economic gains, enhance visitor engagement, and preserve traditional culture. Ultimately, the promotion of Longhu Tower's cultural and creative products enhances heritage preservation, economic development, and cultural enrichment of the community.

### 5. Conclusions

The Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda is a renowned attraction in Taiwan, attracting numerous tourists. Therefore, it is imperative to promote and preserve the local culture associated with the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda through the development of related cultural and creative products. Firstly, it is important to understand the historical and cultural background of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda and be inspired by local cultural resources such as its architectural style, legends, and religious significance. Then, cultural and creative products can be designed to be in line with the area's distinctive characteristics. We researched the market to discern consumers' needs and preferences for cultural and creative products. An online questionnaire survey and focus group discussion were performed to find the types and prices of products that were favored by consumers. When designing products, the elements of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda were integrated. Small models resembling the pagoda were contained in souvenirs, clothing, and mobile phone cases. Products for cultural experience resembling the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda were also designed. Handicrafts or DIY workshops related to the pagoda enabled visitors to create their artworks to deepen their understanding of the cultural significance. It is significant to ensure the quality of the products. Products must be manufactured in high-quality production and design processes to allow consumers to appreciate the charm of the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda. Then, products can align with the values and spirit of the local culture, satisfying residents' religious beliefs. Cultural and creative products associated with the Lotus Pond Dragon and Tiger Pagoda enabled a thorough understanding of its historical and cultural background. By conducting market research and product design, local characteristics with product quality and cultural integrity were found and used for product development.

**Author Contributions:** For research articles with several authors, a short paragraph specifying their contributions must be provided. The following statements should be used “conceptualization, H.H. Lin; methodology, H.H. Lin; validation, H. H. Lin; resources, H.H. Lin; data curation, H.H. Lin and I.T. Chu; writing—original draft preparation, H.H. Lin; writing—review and editing, I.T. Chu; visualization, I.T. Chu. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.” Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported.

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### Appendix

Hello interviewee:

Hello, we would like to investigate your views on the "Evaluation of the Preference Weights of Various Preferences in the Lianchitan Product Development Category". Which elements do you think you would like to see used to develop products in the Lianchitan tourist area, and would it make you useful? The importance of the desire to purchase can be given to those engaged in product design and planning, and they can have a design evaluation. Please help fill in the answers. The questionnaire is purely academic research and is only for overall analysis without individual disclosure. Please feel free to answer. We sincerely thank you for your time and effort in academic research.

#### 1. Summary and explanation of factors

**Table A1.** Summary and explanation of factors.

Convert elements	Illustrate
Religious figures	Using the Lianchitan cultural area, the characteristics of religious characters are transformed and used in product development to present the religious characters cutely. Examples include the Xuantian God, Confucius, and the Door God.
Landscape features	For example, lotus and water chestnut
Building features	Dragon and Tiger Pagoda, temple buildings, and Wuli Pavilion

**Table A2.** Summary and explanation of factors.

<b>Product category</b>	<b>Illustrate</b>
Souvenir	Souvenirs include dolls, postcards, artwork, commemorative coins, and photos.
Daily necessities	Fashion clothing, lighting, leather bags, mobile phone bags.
Accessories	Rings, necklaces, watches, mobile phone charms, handicrafts.
Diet snacks	Local specialties (outer packaging), local food, and snacks.

2. Questionnaire filling instructions

This study has listed the categories that affect Lianchitan product development and constructed it into a system diagram, such as the hierarchical structure diagram on the following page. The questionnaire was analyzed using the list method, which is a qualitative comparison of the relative weights of each system. Each measurement value is assigned from 0 to n. Please fill in the score you think is the most appropriate intensity position based on the meaning of the question and your experience and opinions. For example: Give a score of four points. Four points will be given for the set of four factors. If souvenirs and daily necessities are equally important, please give 2 points each. If souvenirs are more important than accessories, give 3 points and 1 point for accessories. If there is no need to consider accessories at all, souvenirs can be given four points, while accessories can be given 0 points.

**Table A3.** Questionnaire filling instructions.

<b>Evaluation project</b>	<b>Souvenir</b>	<b>Daily necessities</b>	<b>Accessories</b>	<b>Food</b>
Souvenir	—	2	3	2
Daily necessities	2	—	3	1
Accessories	1	1	—	1
Food	2	3	3	—

**【Questionnaire content】**

Please answer the following questions in order (please refer to the instructions on the previous page and fill them in after careful consideration):

(1) Product development category preference (scores are 0–4)

<b>Evaluation project</b>	<b>Souvenir</b>	<b>Daily necessities</b>	<b>Accessories</b>	<b>Food</b>
Souvenir	—			
Daily necessities		—		
Accessories			—	
Food				—

(2) When choosing "souvenirs", please compare the relative preference between the following products (scores are 0–5)

<b>Evaluation project</b>	<b>Doll</b>	<b>Postcard</b>	<b>Artwork</b>	<b>Commemorative coins</b>	<b>Photo</b>
Doll	—				
Postcard		—			
Artwork			—		
Commemorative coins				—	
Photo					—

(3) When choosing "daily necessities", please compare the relative preference between the following products (scores are 0–4)

<b>Evaluation Project</b>	<b>Fashion</b>	<b>Lighting</b>	<b>Leather Bag</b>	<b>Cell Phone Bag</b>
Fashion	—			
Lighting		—		
Leather bag			—	
Cell phone bag				—

(4) When choosing "accessories", please compare the relative preference between the following products (scores are 0–5)



Evaluation Project	Ring	Necklace	Watch	Mobile Phone Charm	Handicraft Products
Ring	—				
Necklace		—			
Watch			—		
Mobile phone charm				—	
Handicraft products					—

(5) When choosing "food and snacks", please compare the relative preference between the following products (scores are 0–2 points)

Evaluation Project	Local Specialties (Outer Packaging)	Local Food and Snacks
Local specialties (outer packaging)	—	
Local food and snacks		—

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