

Research on the Application Strategies of Historical Celebrity Resources in Urban Cultural Brand Building

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Abstract. Rapid urbanization has brought renewed attention to the cultural and symbolic value of historical celebrity resources in contemporary cities. Rather than serving only as markers of local history, such resources are increasingly treated as assets that can shape urban image and identity. For many municipalities, a practical question is how to mobilize these resources in a way that supports distinctive cultural branding. This paper examines the role of historical celebrity resources in urban cultural brand building through a case study of Jiaxing's promotion of itself as the "Hometown of Jin Yong." It reviews the ways in which Jin Yong's legacy has been developed and utilized in Jiaxing, and analyzes the heroic ethos condensed in the maxim "a true hero serves the country and its people." On this basis, the study discusses how the spiritual and material heritage associated with Jin Yong can be converted into branding resources that enhance Jiaxing's reputation and contribute to the construction of a renewed urban identity.

Keywords: Historical celebrities, urban cultural branding, Jin Yong, Jiaxing

1. Introduction

Urban culture, as used here, refers to the marks a city accumulates over time—memories, practices, and symbols that make everyday life locally legible. With economic and social change proceeding at a faster clip, this cultural layer is now discussed not only as heritage but as a factor that shapes how cities grow. Culture sustains civic identity, yet it also feeds development by orienting how people and institutions coordinate. In recent planning debates, strengthening a city's cultural foundations and mobilizing its cultural resources have been treated as practical means to pursue higher-quality development, to form a recognizable image, and to improve outward visibility [1].

Within this discussion, cultural branding has become a central tool. Without a coherent brand, even vivid resources tend to sit at the margins of public attention. By contrast, a well-designed urban cultural brand can invite residents to take part in city life more deliberately, deepening identification and a sense of belonging; this, in turn, helps cultural practices persist. Branding also gives clearer direction to cultural industries by linking activities to identifiable demand, which supports steadier growth. Under such conditions, cultural vitality and economic performance are more likely to reinforce one another rather than moving on separate tracks.

2. Understanding the value of historical celebrity resources

Historical celebrities function as distinctive carriers of urban culture. Through their writings, ideas, and conduct, they leave stories and symbols that shape how places are remembered. These works and reputations constitute a transmittable legacy rather than a static commemoration. A familiar example is Su Shi in Hangzhou: his literary record and his interventions in local governance have become intertwined with how the city represents itself. For many visitors to West Lake, Su Shi's poems serve as an entry point to the site's cultural memory, illustrating how individual figures can animate collective understanding.

For contemporary urban development, the point is not merely to preserve such resources but to use them carefully. Systematic sorting of the legacy, the identification of themes, and the articulation of representative symbols can supply the material with which urban culture continues to evolve. In practice, these steps consolidate cultural branding, strengthen cultural soft power, and give greater depth to civic identity. At the same time, distilling the core values embedded in the culture of historical celebrities can provide symbolic reference points for broader national goals, supporting cultural confidence and the creative transformation and innovative development of China's outstanding traditional culture in the new era [2].

3. The current landscape of historical celebrity resource development in Jiaxing

Since modern times, Jiaxing has produced numerous outstanding masters, including Wang Guowei, Xu Zhimo, and Mao Dun, who were all prominent figures in their respective fields. The cultural lineage has continuously flowed, advancing without interruption [3]. However, in the process of cultural development in Jiaxing, the exploration and utilization of historical celebrity resources have been notably insufficient. Many valuable cultural treasures related to historical figures have not been fully developed or transformed, leading to a lack of distinctive and memorable cultural markers in Jiaxing's urban brand creation. The immense cultural potential embedded in these historical figures has yet to be effectively unleashed.

When discussing the unlimited potential of historical celebrities in cultural inheritance and urban image shaping, it is impossible not to mention Mr. Jin Yong. Reflecting on the development of Chinese literature in the 20th century, Mr. Jin Yong grasped the creative regeneration of the Chinese literary tradition. Through the genre of wuxia novels, which preserve the nation's cultural bloodline, he persistently created literature against the backdrop of national history and culture. With unparalleled imagination, he elevated the humanistic spirit of China to a new height. Today, fully exploring Mr. Jin Yong's literary achievements and cultural influence undoubtedly provides Jiaxing with a fresh opportunity for cultural development. Currently, Jiaxing is fully implementing the important speech of General Secretary Xi Jinping during his visit to Zhejiang, vigorously promoting celebrity culture represented by figures like Mr. Jin Yong, and focusing on the creative redevelopment of outstanding traditional Chinese culture. If celebrity culture is the soul of a city, transforming "the hometown of celebrities" into an urban cultural brand becomes a unique channel for spreading the city's image.

4. Jin Yong culture: etching the imprint of the times

"True heroes serve the country and the people," this resounding phrase, like a shining star, has illuminated the youth journeys of countless individuals. As a literary giant with a vast readership in the Chinese-speaking world, Jin Yong used his brilliant pen to sketch the captivating world of wuxia, creating a romantic legend unique to the Chinese people. "Life is about making a grand entrance and then quietly leaving." In 2018, the master of wuxia novels, Jin Yong, left us forever. Mr. Jin Yong was a multifaceted figure; not only was he a renowned patriot, but also a distinguished wuxia novelist,

journalist, political commentator, and social activist. Throughout his life, Mr. Jin Yong remained deeply concerned about his country and its people, infusing his works with a profound sense of patriotism. His 15 meticulously crafted works are deeply rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese traditional culture and have bridged a communication gap among Chinese-speaking people worldwide, becoming a common spiritual language for all. His works have also strengthened the cultural confidence of generations and have become brilliant gems in the treasure trove of Chinese culture.

5. Research on Jiaxing's urban cultural brand strategy

A visit to the hometown of Jin Yong, looking back at the deep affection for one's roots. Over the years, Jiaxing has consistently highlighted the profound sentiment behind Jin Yong's "great heroism" and the homecoming story behind "a dream of the martial world." On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Jin Yong's birth, Jiaxing launched a series of cultural events to build the Jin Yong cultural brand, creating a complete urban cultural brand system. The creative development of Jin Yong's cultural resources will bring both content and form updates to Jiaxing's urban cultural brand and is also a necessary means of integrating celebrity culture into contemporary life.

5.1. Cultural seminar: Jin Yong cultural academic exchange

Festivals and themed events compress a region's symbols and everyday memories into a short span, making them legible to residents and visitors alike. For cities, they are working stages on which cultural narratives can be tested and shown. In Jiaxing, the Jin Yong brand has been carried by six exchange activities that commemorate the writer, read closely across his texts, and open his literary world to different audiences. The program brought scholars, long-time readers, and curious newcomers into the same room and asked them to talk to one another. The aim was practical: keep elements of traditional Chinese culture in live conversation and give international guests a concrete way to approach contemporary China through a figure they recognize.

One anchor event took place in Haining, Jiaxing: an academic conference titled "Centenary of Jin Yong: The Everlasting Imaginary World." Specialists in Jin Yong studies met with veteran readers to discuss the scholarly value of his oeuvre and why it still matters. Lectures, roundtables, and reader-focused sessions ran in parallel. The format let Jiaxing tie its local sites and memory of the author to ongoing academic circuits, adding a clear intellectual layer to the city's cultural brand. Figure 1 shows scenes from the "Centenary of Jin Yong's Birth" event.



Figure 1. On-site activities at the "Centenary of Jin Yong's Birth" event

5.2. Cultural experience: Jin Yong's Wuxia immersive experience

Alongside the academic program, Jiaxing also designed a number of activities aimed at the wider public and fans of Jin Yong's novels. During the festival period, the city issued 10,000 "Hero

Passports” that guided visitors through seven themed locations, including Zicheng, Yanyu Tower, and Xiaopenglai. Holders of the passport could visit 29 A-level scenic spots across Jiaying, such as Zicheng and Nanhu, and enjoy free admission. The booklet introduced Jin Yong’s life, major experiences, and creative trajectory, and offered concise summaries of his representative works, evoking readers’ memories of the wuxia worlds that he imagined. It also included a specially designed “Jiaying Map” marking key places mentioned in his stories, such as Zui Xian Lou on Nanhu in *The Legend of the Condor Heroes* and Xiaopenglai Park in Xincheng, which is associated with the character Huang Rong. By linking specific locations in the novels to sites in the city, the passport transformed reading impressions into a tangible route for visitors.



Figure 2. Jiaying issues Hero Passports

Another highlight was the Zicheng Market program, which staged a “Jiaying Zicheng Sword Discussion” under the theme “Saluting the Master.” Poetry readings and scripted recitations drawn from Jin Yong’s novels asked participants to sit with the friction between loyalty and righteousness that runs through his stories. A companion module—“Qin, Incense, Tea, and Flowers,” modeled on literati aesthetics—set a quiet pace. Sound, scent, taste, and visual cues were layered to let visitors approach the meanings in Jin Yong’s work through experience rather than summary. Traditional martial-arts demonstrations then translated wuxia imagery into bodily movement, echoing the famous “Sword Discussion at Mount Hua” and giving audiences a vivid feel for the martial worlds in his fiction.

On the visitor side, the organizers leaned into immersion. In the central Zicheng area, a live wuxia performance ran inside everyday street scenes. Performers modeled on Jin Yong’s heroes moved through the crowd, creating unscripted encounters that blurred performance and ordinary life. The design nudged people from watching to taking part and, over the course of a visit, drew them into the narrative world associated with Jin Yong. The program, in turn, broadened interest in Jiaying’s urban culture and added a recognizable feature to the city’s cultural-tourism mix. Over a longer horizon, such experiential work helps shape how the Jin Yong brand reads to visitors in Jiaying and in the surrounding region.

5.3. Cultural interpretation: technological empowerment in cultural promotion

The stage play *The Living Heroes* provided an interpretive framework for rethinking Jin Yong’s works in contemporary terms. Its first chapter, “Jin Yong’s Martial World: Heroic Heart and Righteousness,” brought together academic specialists on Jin Yong’s fiction, television producers, and researchers of martial arts literature to discuss key themes in his narratives and their cultural implications. The second chapter, “Jin Yong’s World: A Heart of Sincerity,” shifted the focus to global readership: overseas fans shared short video reflections under the theme “Jin Yong in My Heart,” while translators of his novels into English and international scholars exchanged views on how his stories travel across languages and cultures. The third chapter, “Hometown of Jin Yong: Affection for One’s Roots,” returned to Jiaying itself. The vice principal of Jiaying No. 1 High School,

who had close personal ties to Jin Yong, recounted episodes from the writer's life history, adding a more intimate dimension to the event.

Jiaxing also released *The Book and the Sword: Hometown Edition* to audiences at home and abroad. This edition situates the narrative against the backdrop of Jiaxing's local culture and offers readers a revised interpretation of the classic novel through regionally inflected commentary and supplementary material. In doing so, it links Jin Yong's fictional world more explicitly with the city's own historical and cultural context, and provides an alternative entry point for international readers interested in both the novel and its place of origin. In parallel, *Jin Yong's 28 Martial Arts Landmarks in Zhejiang: A Picture Guide* was published, visually mapping characters and episodes from the novels onto 28 "martial arts landmarks" in the province. Conceived as a scroll-like sequence of landscape images, the guide invites readers to begin their journey in "Jiaxing Prefecture" and to trace Jin Yong's imagined martial world step by step across real locations.

The promotional video *Jiaxing in Jin Yong's Writings*, produced with the aid of AI tools, further experimented with new modes of cultural presentation. By using AI-based image and text processing to highlight scenes, motifs, and characters connected with Jiaxing, the video reassembled familiar elements from Jin Yong's works into a short, visually driven narrative. Although modest in scale, this attempt illustrates how emerging technologies can be used to reframe historical celebrity resources, diversify the ways in which they are communicated, and create additional points of contact between literary heritage and contemporary cultural industries.

5.4. Cultural prosperity: revitalizing the landmarks of Jin Yong's hometown

If celebrity culture speaks to a city's "soul," the places where writers and public figures once lived record that culture in brick and routine, serving as sites of memory [4]. Preserved residences keep traditions anchored to specific streets and neighborhoods. Jin Yong kept close ties with Haining and returned six times. In recent years, Haining has emphasized inheriting and reinterpreting his martial-arts culture by planning three tourist routes that connect the former residence with the Yanguan and Xieshi scenic areas. Jiaxing has also upgraded the former residence and the Jin Yong Academy so that visitors encounter his life and writing in dedicated, legible spaces.

The exhibition at the former residence is laid out as a guided path with five sections—"A Jiangnan Family," "Youth in Search," "The Life of a Sword and a Book," "A Sincere Heart," and "Jin Yong Around the World." Along the route, interactive screens introduce central characters and settings; VR stations let visitors enter classic scenes such as the "Sword Discussion at Mount Hua." The museum brings together manuscripts, original newspaper clippings, and other materials collected from multiple locations, many now on public display for the first time.

Beyond static displays, the residence runs seasonal recitation sessions. Young performers in Hanfu recite and sing passages inspired by the novels, adding a live layer to the galleries. During selected events, visitors may wear period-style costumes, take on named roles, and interact with actors playing martial-arts figures. These formats move participants from passive viewing to guided participation and keep attention on the narrative worlds Jin Yong created.

5.5. Innovative inheritance: the continuation of Jin Yong culture among the youth

Recent conversations about cultural inheritance give younger audiences a larger share of the stage. In Jiaxing, many participants in Jin Yong-related activities come from the post-1990 and post-2000 cohorts, whose preferences and ways of showing up differ from earlier groups. In response, the city launched the year-long "Youth National Trend Season," inviting young people to enter Jin Yong's world through formats that speak to contemporary youth culture and the broader guochao trend.

The program runs online and offline. Offline activities rotate by season and theme. Organizers map characters from the novels onto non-player characters in interactive games—treasure hunts, “flower-picking” tasks, arena-style contests, and scripted mysteries—so that role-play and task design lead participants through key scenes and motifs rather than simply replaying plot. In parallel, the year-round online “Jin Yong’s ‘Jiang’ and ‘Lake’ Challenge” offers quiz modules and other light interactions that let participants revisit classic episodes and test what they know in a casual setting.

Taken together, the “Youth National Trend Season” has provided younger audiences with concrete opportunities to engage with Jin Yong’s works on their own terms. While the long-term impact will require further observation, the series has already drawn noticeable attention and participation from the post-1990 and post-2000 generations and has added a youth-oriented dimension to the city’s efforts to sustain and renew its cultural brand.

6. Conclusion

Building a recognizable cultural brand is a gradual and path-dependent process rather than an achievement that can be realized in a short time. Under the combined pressures of marketization and increasingly diverse social values, maintaining the vitality of refined culture requires more than occasional campaigns; it calls for sustained attention and realistic policy support from local governments [5]. The case of Jiaxing shows how a local government can work with historical celebrity resources over the long term. By consistently highlighting Jin Yong’s legacy and involving different sectors of the city in the tasks of inheritance, protection, and promotion, Jiaxing has experimented with multiple approaches to the development and communication of celebrity culture. The initiatives discussed in this paper—ranging from academic exchanges and stage productions to immersive tourism routes, youth-oriented “national trend” activities, and the revitalization of key landmarks—have together created a relatively rich framework for presenting Jin Yong’s culture. These efforts have attracted fans and visitors, broadened public contact with his works, and contributed to the visibility of Jiaxing’s cultural image. Although the full impact of these measures will need to be assessed over a longer period, the current experience of Jiaxing suggests one possible model for integrating historical celebrity culture into urban brand building. It offers a concrete reference for other cities that seek to balance cultural inheritance with contemporary urban development.

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