



Research on IP Image Design and Communication of Tujia Cultural Elements

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Abstract: With the acceleration of urbanization, the traditional culture of the Tujia people is facing the risk of gradual disappearance. With the help of IP image design as an innovative method, this paper explores how to transform the abstract elements of Tujia culture into concrete symbols with cultural symbolism, and realize their effective cultural dissemination and inheritance through modern communication means. Based on core cultural elements such as Tujia costumes and crafts, this paper combines the practice of character design to construct an IP image that meets modern aesthetics and has cultural depth, and puts forward a communication strategy adapted to the needs of the new era. Through this research, we aim to stimulate public attention and interest in Tujia culture, and provide feasible theoretical and practical references for the protection and innovative dissemination of national culture.

Keywords: Tujia, IP image design, cultural communication

1. Research Background

With the acceleration of urbanization and modernization, Tujia culture is facing the challenge of increasing decline. Although the Tujia ethnic group has a rich intangible cultural heritage, however, the intensification of population mobility, young people going out to work and the gradual change of traditional lifestyles have led to the gradual marginalization of their culture.[1] Against this background, how to innovatively protect and pass on Tujia culture in modern society has become an important issue to be addressed. The dissemination of Tujia culture is not only to protect its unique cultural elements, but also to enhance the younger generation's sense of identity and interest in its culture through innovative dissemination methods, and to promote more people's understanding of and respect for this national cultural heritage.

In recent years, character design has shown unique advantages in the field of cultural communication due to its fun and high interactivity, which not only attracts public attention but also provides new ways of cultural expression.[2] This study aims to explore the innovative communication mode of ethnic culture by analyzing the elements of Tujia culture and applying them in character image design. Constructing IP images with cultural symbolism can not only enhance the public recognition and identity of Tujia culture, but also inject new vitality into the development of cultural tourism industry.

2. Overview of Tujia

Tujia is the seventh largest ethnic minority in China. According to the statistics of China Statistical Yearbook-2021, the population of Tujia in China is about 9587732, mainly distributed in the regions of Hunan, Hubei and Chongqing. The geographical environment and historical background of these regions laid the foundation for the formation of Tujia culture. As an ethnic group with a long history, the Tujia demonstrate a deep cultural heritage in language, dress, beliefs and customs. At present, the Tujia have 23 national intangible cultural heritages, covering many aspects such as literature, skills and dances. However, with the advance of modernization, the traditional culture of the Tujia is facing a crisis of gradual loss. Traditional Tujia costumes and handicrafts are gradually becoming scarce, and the substitution of modernized costumes and industrialized products is reducing the number of scenes in which these traditional elements can be used and the means of their dissemination.

3. IP image design and cultural communication

IP refers to fictional characters or symbols with unique personalities and characteristics presented in stories, brands or any narratives. As a carrier of cultural symbols, IP image realizes cultural communication through visual expression, conveys emotions and values, and establishes cultural identity.[3] For example, the Tang Nui is based on the Tang Dynasty figurines of the Shaanxi History Museum, which skillfully blends the softness of Tang Dynasty women with modern budding styles, and has become one of Xi'an's city business cards, appearing in a wide range of large-scale events at home and

abroad, and promoting the dissemination of the Tang Dynasty culture. IP design transforms abstract culture into concrete images, and enhances cultural identity and dissemination through anthropomorphization and narrative expression.

In addition, IP design has the potential for commercialization, promoting local cultural and economic development through derivative products and cross-channel communication. Take Bubble Mart as an example, its creative characters and cross-border cooperation attract young consumers, and its revenue in 2023 will exceed 6.3 billion yuan.[4]

4. Tujia Cultural Element Extraction and IP Design

4.1 Extraction and Analysis of Tujia Cultural Elements

Tujia's costumes, brocade art and white tiger totem are the most representative and visually impactful elements of its culture. The colors of traditional Tujia costumes are mainly black, white and blue, with red as the embellishment, symbolizing auspiciousness and festivity. The costumes are loose and multi-layered, adapted to the natural environment of the hills and valleys and the needs of agricultural labor, and are practical, warm and protective at the same time. Men tend to wear simple shirts and pants, while women's clothing is more decorative, including embroidered garments, pleated skirts and fine embroidery, often displaying ethnic designs on the sleeves and hemlines of the garments, and matching silver jewelry such as necklaces and earrings. Such clothing elements are strong cultural symbols that can directly convey the history and style of the Tujia people, and are therefore an important visual basis for IP design.

The patterns of Xilankapu brocade art are dominated by geometric shapes such as rhombus and zigzag pattern, and the simple geometric patterns skillfully incorporate life scenes and ethnic history and culture into the patterns. [5] These patterns not only reflect the unique understanding of the Tujia people of nature and life, but also have a distinct visual recognition. By simplifying them, the IP image can be infused with the charm of traditional art while fitting in with modern aesthetics.

As the totem of the Tujia, the white tiger symbolizes the power of nature and animal spirits, representing the Tujia's worship of nature and belief in power.[6] The white tiger totem can enhance the mystery and power of the IP image, and is an effective element for building character depth and cultural background.



Figure 1. Tujia's costumes Xilankapu White tiger

4.2 Tujia IP image design

Based on the analysis of the Tujia cultural elements in 4.1 above, the IP image of "Tubao" is designed. Considering the modern aesthetic demand, the design follows the principle of "simplicity", simplifying the complex Silankappu patterns and national costumes while retaining their unique features. The character is based on the white tiger and combines the traditional costumes of the Tujia ethnic group, designing both men's and women's costumes. The tiger stripes and red blush of the character add cuteness and affinity, making it both ethnic and modern cartoon style.

In order to strengthen the deep connection between the character and the culture of the Tujia people, and to convey a sense of closeness and friendship, the character was named "Tu Bao". "Tu" deeply represents the root of Tujia culture, while 'Bao' symbolizes the preciousness and inheritance of the culture. This kind of naming not only skillfully highlights the cultural background, but also enhances the charm of the character through the mildness and friendliness of the language.



Figure 2. Tujia IP Tu Bao

4.3 IP image dissemination strategy

After the Tujia IP image is established, a series of emoticons can be designed around the main IP image in order to maintain user stickiness. As an important tool in modern social media and digital communication, emoticons can quickly attract audience attention and increase the exposure of the IP image. For example, the IP image of the Zhengzhou version of Kung Fu Baby spread rapidly on social platforms through emoticons, successfully triggering widespread attention and promoting the dissemination of regional characteristics and culture.[7]

In addition, we can learn from the successful case of Kumamoto Bear. Kumamoto Bear has gradually infiltrated its image into consumers' daily life and become a globally recognized cultural symbol through cross-border co-branding cooperation with several brands and extensive launch of cultural and creative products. The Tujia IP image can likewise launch cultural and creative products with Tujia characteristics, such as T-shirts, backpacks, and accessories that combine Silankapu patterns and traditional Tujia clothing elements, combining traditional culture with modern design styles to form a market appeal that attracts young people and consumers. Meanwhile, co-branding cooperation with other brands can also enhance the market influence of the IP and further promote the recognition of Tujia culture in modern society.

Finally, by producing animated short films or storytelling communication related to Tujia culture, the audience's understanding and recognition of Tujia culture can be enhanced. By telling the history, traditions and stories of the Tujia through entertaining ways, it can easily deliver these cultural contents to the younger generation of audiences, broaden the communication channels of the IP, and further enhance its cultural value.



Figure 3. Tu Bao Emoji Design

5. Conclusion

With the rapid development of mobile Internet, the dissemination of national culture in modern society has ushered in new opportunities. By combining traditional ethnic culture with modern trend elements, it breaks the boundary between ethnic culture and contemporary culture, and provides a new way for cultural innovation and inheritance. With the help of IP image design, ethnic culture can be integrated into the daily life of young people and attract their attention and interest in traditional culture. Tujia IP image, for example, not only shows the unique charm of national culture, but also provides a feasible model for its dissemination and inheritance in the new era through the innovative transformation of traditional cultural elements and the use of modern communication means.

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