

Expression of the “Lichun” (Beginning of Spring) Imagery in Creative Incense Product Design

Chenyan Ding

Shanghai Lida University, Shanghai, China

Abstract: Integrating Lichun imagery into incense design gives seasonal creativity a cultural basis. Translating symbolic elements into incense scent, form, and packaging evokes rebirth-and-vitality-related sensory experiences. Spring-themed scents meet psychological needs, and materials are sustainable. Market-focused prototypes boost ritual and cultural resonance, while practical guidelines ensure product authenticity and feasibility. This design blends tradition and innovation, creating appealing, eco-friendly, market-adaptable incense.

Keywords: Lichun imagery; incense design; seasonal product innovation

1. Introduction

Lichun starts the Chinese lunisolar year, symbolizing life revival, yang energy rise, and growth. In incense design, closely linked to time, ritual, and mood, Lichun’s symbolism is rich but underused. The problem is turning abstract Lichun imagery into marketable, culturally-rich products. This paper explores, from multiple perspectives, how incense design can show rebirth, vitality, and harmony with nature.

2. Cultural Essence of Lichun and Its Imagery Translation

Lichun imagery is more than just a seasonal sign. It includes metaphors like sprouts emerging, the warm breeze, plum blossoms in the cold, and silkworms moving. These motifs are not only visually beautiful but also deeply rooted in traditional Chinese cosmology, standing for rebirth, movement, and life’s subtle changes[1]. Full of stories and symbols, they create a language connecting nature, spirit, and human feelings. In incense design, we can use the following methods to translate these symbols:

2.1 Scent Narratives

Fragrance blends can capture early spring’s moisture and vitality. Use green bamboo, magnolia, moss, first rain, and light citrus as olfactory cues. The scent should change subtly over time, reflecting spring’s transition from stillness to activity, and from earthy to floral scents, so users can experience spring through smell.

2.2 Form Language

Incense sticks, cones, or coils can have organic, sprouting forms to represent new growth. Holders can be shaped like budding branches, dew-laden leaves, etc., showing a gentle shift in seasonal energy and aesthetic.

2.3 Packaging Aesthetics

Visual and tactile elements can draw from traditional Chinese ink brushwork, celadon glaze, or rice paper. These create a sense of renewal and elegance, connecting the product to both culture and modernity.

This holistic design turns abstract Lichun imagery into a multi-sensory experience. Incense products tell the Lichun story through an experiential evocation, engaging sight, smell, touch, and emotion.

3. Integrating Olfactory Psychology and Seasonal Emotion

From a user psychology viewpoint, scent is highly emotional and linked to memory[2]. Spring, more than other seasons, stirs feelings of hope, renewal, and gentle awakening. Well-crafted spring-inspired scents can improve mood, fight winter sluggishness, and refresh the mind[3]. Studies show that terpenes like limonene and pinene in early-spring plants have mood-boosting and anti-anxiety effects[4], making them great for seasonal aroma design.

So, Lichun-themed incense products need a multi-level emotional approach:\

3.1 Target Seasonal Emotional Needs

Develop formulas to fight winter fatigue, improve mental clarity, balance emotions, and gently stimulate creativity,

which are key emotional needs during seasonal changes.

3.2 Use Layered Fragrance Structures

A refined olfactory design should have fresh top notes (like citrus zest or green tea leaves), soothing heart notes (such as soft florals or white woods), and base notes (like translucent resins or delicate musk) for lasting calm and warmth.

3.3 Align Ritual with Renewal

Associate incense use with Lichun activities like spring cleaning, ancestral offerings, or setting personal intentions. Encouraging users to light incense at these times enriches the product experience and ties it to daily cultural rhythms. This psychophysical alignment not only boosts immediate sensory pleasure but also strengthens the emotional bond between users and the product, cultivating long-term brand loyalty through genuine seasonal resonance.

4. Material Innovation and Sustainable Spring Expression

An incense product that truly represents Lichun should evoke seasonal aesthetics and reflect spring's ecological values. With consumers caring more about the environment, integrating eco-design principles is crucial for authenticity and market appeal.

4.1 Biodegradable Carriers

Use natural materials like bamboo powder and traditional binders (makko or joss powder). This makes the incense base clean-burning, non-toxic, and biodegradable, in line with spring's natural growth and low-impact principles.

4.2 Seasonal Botanicals

Use spring-harvested herbs and plants like Chinese mugwort, tender tea buds, jasmine, and plum blossom petals[5]. They add real-life scents and symbolic meaning, and emphasize seasonal and local elements as well as agricultural sustainability.

4.3 Eco-conscious Packaging

Choose innovative packaging like seed-embedded paper. After opening, users can plant it, and flowers will grow, symbolizing rebirth. Combine it with less ink printing, compostable inner sleeves, and renewable fibers to show the Lichun philosophy through touch.

These material choices don't just beautify the product. They represent the Lichun values in real life[6]. By connecting nature, culture, and user experiences, they turn incense from a simple consumer good into a symbol of circular beauty and mindful living.

5. Product Scenarios and Market-Oriented Prototyping

To make Lichun-inspired incense designs practical and market-friendly, link creativity to real-world use. Here are some strategies:

5.1 Limited Seasonal Collections

Launch yearly Lichun-exclusive incense collections in partnership with lifestyle, wellness or tea brands[7]. Combine them with seasonal events and gift sets to show the traditional calendar's modern value.

5.2 Modular Incense Sets

Design sets based on early spring's different emotional/sensory states. For example, an "Awaken", "Flow", "Blossom" set can take users on a seasonal journey with mood/time-based usage tips.

5.3 Interactive Experiences

Add dynamic features to incense holders, like bud-shaped bases that open or heat-reactive glazes. Also, put QR codes on packaging to link to digital content. This enriches the cultural story and attracts young, tech-loving consumers.

6. Practical Guidelines for Design Realization

For creative workers and product developers, the following guidelines help with Lichun-themed incense design. They combine cultural awareness, material management, and user-centered ideas to apply creativity in real-world products:

6.1 Cultural Accuracy

Study traditional lunisolar calendars, local folk customs, and symbolic elements. Make sure the design stories truly rep-

resent different understandings of Lichun in China. Working with cultural historians or artisans can better integrate symbols.

6.2 Scent Testing

Test scents with representative users during the season. Evaluate not only how true the scent is but also its emotional and ritual impact. Do the feedback rounds around late winter and early spring to get timely responses.

6.3 Material Feasibility

Work with local herb growers, botanical suppliers, and scent labs to get good, traceable, and sustainable raw materials. Early cooperation with the supply chain ensures sensory goals match logistics and environmental ethics.

6.4 User Co-creation

Let consumers choose ingredients or tell stories via digital platforms like seasonal polls, social media challenges, or crowdsourced naming. This makes the product more relevant and builds excitement before launch.

By focusing on evidence, eco-responsibility, and user participation, incense design creates products that are more than just beautiful. They're connected to the season, express culture, and have real-world appeal.

7. Conclusion

Incense, as a cultural and commercial item, can turn intangible heritage into daily experiences. Incorporating Lichun's symbolism in incense design connects the past with the present, nature with home, and tradition with innovation.

This approach promotes a season-aware design culture. It follows environmental rhythms, honors cultural identity, and appeals to human emotions through all senses. Thanks to fragrance, form, and story, Lichun is no longer just a calendar date but a lived experience in our spaces.

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Author Bio

Chenyang Ding, female, Han nationality, April 2004, Shanghai, Shanghai Lida University, Visual Communication Design, Design Studies, undergraduate student, 201600.