

Research on the Cultural Connotations and Aesthetic Values in Chinese and Foreign Packaging Design

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Abstract: Using a comparison framework of cultural philosophy, visual rhetoric, material application and technical process, etc., this paper investigates the importance of cultural identity and aesthetic direction in modern packaging. Based on the above, it can be concluded that packaging Design is not just for protection but also to pass on culture and evoke emotions. Under the trend of globalisation, the cross-cultural integration of elements, use of environmentally friendly materials and new technologies, personalised and emotional designs will be some of the directions in which the packaging industry will go in the future.

Keywords: cultural connotation; aesthetic paradigm; cross-cultural comparison; visual semiotics; packaging design

1. Introduction

With the development of globalisation in recent years, a large number of goods have been spread everywhere and thus need to be protected during transit through good packaging design. In addition to the basic purpose of protecting goods and transporting them, packaging design now also serves to build a brand image, communicate with different cultures, and give people some joy in their daily lives. With the changing demands of the market for cultural resonance and premium aesthetic experience, cultural signifiers and aesthetic values carried in packaging have gradually come to be reasons for people's purchases. Through a serious comparison of Chinese and foreign packaging design, it can help to protect and promote our own culture, as well as stimulate the growth of design innovation. It will also help to promote cross-cultural communication and boost the international competitiveness and cultural visibility of Chinese packaging Design.

2. The Embodiment of Cultural Connotations in Chinese and Foreign Packaging Design

2.1 Cultural Roots and Heritage in Chinese Packaging Design

The Design of traditional Chinese packaging is based on a rich system of visual semiotics. Dragons, phoenixes, "ruyi" patterns, paper-cut silhouettes and other traditional patterns are cultural symbols of good fortune and beauty. The systems of iconographic representation are added to packaging Design not only for decorative purposes but also carry certain socio-cultural wishes [1]. For example, in packaging for matrimonial products, dragon and phoenix pictures are commonly used to symbolize happiness and good fortune in marriage, which reflects the deep-seated collective psychological archetype of the people.

Chinese calligraphy has an excellent linear dynamism and spatial philosophy, so it is also one of the traditional forms of Chinese design. Different calligraphic types have various emotions and brand images, so they are used in different ways, for example, the formality of seal script, the regularity of clerical script, and the elegance of running and cursive scripts. Runes and cursive scripts are frequently used on the tea package to write the name of the product and classical poems, so that the literati style of traditional tea culture can be seen.

The use of colour in traditional Chinese design is also based on symbolic systems. Red represents festivity and life, so it is often used on the packaging of the Spring Festival and wedding gifts. Yellow has historically been associated with the imperial family and the earth element, so it is frequently chosen for premium and luxury gift packaging. Green is for the environment and has been used in sustainable products recently. The use of cultural codes in colour can help a brand be recognised more easily by China's public and deeply move people.

Philosophical paradigms have also laid the foundation for the concept of Chinese packaging. Confucianism places great importance on "li" (ritual propriety) and "ren" (benevolence), so in the design of works, both a sense of solemnity and a spirit of care are expressed. Therefore, gift packaging is detailed in its construction and has a simple form, and people use it

to show respect and good intentions to others. The Confucian ideal of moderation and harmony can also be expressed in the balance of a work of art.

Taoist thought believes in “ziran” (nature) and “wuwei” (non-action); thus, Chinese packaging art has adopted a simple and unadorned style. This model promotes the use of raw, environmentally friendly materials such as bamboo, wood, uncoated paper and hemp; it has an ecological consciousness and aims to be authentic. In short, the Taoist-style design does not add many ornaments and is rather smooth in line. The ideas of Yin-Yang and the Five Elements in cosmology are often applied to colours and space to achieve harmony amongst the pictures.

2.2 Cultural Characteristics and Expression in Foreign Packaging Design

The design of foreign packaging in the West has a particular set of cultural vocabulary. Iconography and classical stories from Greek and Roman mythology are frequently used to give products an old-fashioned, mysterious and romantic atmosphere [2]. For instance, in the cosmetics and fragrance industries, structure Design and decorative patterns are often based on classical sculpture and deities to convey the ideals of elegance and timeless beauty.

The two cultures of Judaism and Christianity have also had an impact on Western visual culture. The symbols of a cross, angels and biblical stories are often used in the design of packaging to give it a festive atmosphere during the Christmas and Easter seasons. At the same time, Western art history is also a vast collection of visual strategies; for instance, to increase the art value of a certain type of commercial packaging, the light and colour of Impressionism or the detail of Naturalism are often used.

Packaging in many countries also has different colours and symbols due to cultural differences. French Design is generally considered to be in the style of romance and sensitivity, so it uses delicate fonts, light pastel colours, and exquisite ornaments to reflect the nation’s history of high fashion. German Design is based on the heritage of the Bauhaus and Modernist functionalism, thus aiming for rational structure, simple typography, and light colours; it is also influenced by a culture that values accuracy, practicality and fine craftsmanship. Japanese packaging has combined the native worship of nature with modern simplicity. It has been made from natural materials, added with exquisite detail and arranged in an organised “unboxing” event to convey that it is very sensitive to users’ sense of experience and has taken on the philosophy of wabi-sabi.

3. Differences in Aesthetic Values Between Chinese and Foreign Packaging Design

3.1 Aesthetic Concepts and Expressions in Chinese Packaging Design

3.1.1 Creation of “Yijing” (Artistic Mood) and Implicit Aesthetics

A characteristic of Chinese packaging design is its pursuit of “yijing”, which is an evocative artistic mood; that is to say, there is an implicit aesthetic that “meaning extends beyond visible form”. Designers do not directly present ideas but rather through arrangement, empty Space and metaphor to cultivate a poetic atmosphere that consumers can feel and imagine[3]. For example, many of the old-style mooncake boxes are decorated with pictures such as a full moon, a jade rabbit and osmanthus branches, which represent family reunion and the harmony of seasons, and therefore these boxes possess cultural meaning even before eating.

In terms of composition, “liubai” (intentional blank Space) and the dialectic of void and solidity (“xushi xiangsheng”) are used according to the rules of traditional Chinese ink wash painting; “liubai” adds room to breathe for the picture, giving it a light and delicate sense that can stimulate people’s imagination, and through a subtle combination of the foreground and background, a logical hierarchy is established to enhance the depth of graphic storytelling.

3.1.2 Application of Formal Aesthetic Principles

Chinese packaging strictly follows the old ideas of formal beauty and is characterised by symmetry, rhythmic vitality, etc. Symmetry is often used in the traditional pastry and ceremonial packaging to give it a sense of stability, formality and tradition. Rhythm and cadence can be created by various means in the methodic repetition, gradation and alternation of visual variables such as line weight, motif size and colour intensity, thereby adding a sense of movement to a still picture. Pay close attention to the proportion, and otherwise the structure of the packaging will not be in harmony with the goods inside.

3.2 Aesthetic Characteristics and Pursuits in Foreign Packaging Design

3.2.1 Visual Salience and Direct Communication

The main emphasis of Western packaging ideas is on aesthetics and the initial impression. Aesthetic Strategy: Given the strong competition in the retail industry today, use high-contrast colours, simple shapes and generous empty space, clear and concise text, etc.

The traditional way is that the product’s attributes and the brand’s ideas are stated directly. The information architecture

of food packaging is highly functionalist; thus, there are many hyper-realistic product images and nutrition facts, as well as technical data and performance figures on consumer electronics packaging. In line with the Western idea of consumer rationality and the demand for efficiency, it is simple and direct.

3.2.2 Multicultural Hybridity and Aesthetic Innovation

Due to the process of globalisation, many new international design concepts for packaging are now more multicultural in nature. Deliberately collides and synthesises different cultural signs to add new life to the field. Many Western designers have taken some elements from China, such as Chinese-style font patterns and Japanese Ukiyo-e culture, and then created new avant-garde visual identities based on a modern grid system.

At the same time, Aesthetic innovation is promoted by materials science and manufacturing technology. With the development of new technologies such as 3D printing, laser holographic foil and intelligent substrate, the range of sensory experience for packaging has been continually extended to provide consumers with more pleasure in sight and touch.

4. Factors Influencing the Cultural Connotations and Aesthetic Values of Chinese and Foreign Packaging Design.

4.1 Historical and Cultural Traditions

4.1.1 The Shaping of Chinese Packaging Design by History and Culture

China's millennial historical continuum is the epistemology of the packaging Design. Ancient imperial court culture was relatively lavish and had a strict hierarchy, so the contemporary high-end gift packaging also tends to be very luxurious and elaborate. Vernacular folk culture is practical, lively and local in nature, on the other hand. Handicraft packaging inspired by folk art, such as embroidery and woodblock prints, has added some life to the design world. Additionally, there are numerous subjects and story ideas that can be inspired by classic literature and poetry.

4.1.2 The Imprint of Foreign History and Culture in Packaging Design

Foreign design is also subject to the same history. The Proportions and sculpture of the ancient Greeks and Romans are still often imitated in Western architectural design today. The late Middle Ages passed down the system of religious images and the aesthetics of illuminated manuscripts; at the same time, in the Renaissance, a new direction of humanism was promoted, leading to greater attention to anatomy and perspective, thus expanding the expression and intellectual content of European packaging graphics.

4.2 Social Values and Consumption Concepts

4.2.1 The Influence of Chinese Social Values on Packaging Design

The basic socio-cultural system in China is collectivist, emphasising the connection of family and relationships. These values are shown through the front-facing design of gift boxes, and at the same time, the design is also evaluated on how well it respects society and follows the rules of hierarchy. With the economic development of China, people's consumption needs have gradually changed; now, it is more about experience and identity than just function. Therefore, nowadays new packaging needs to be high-quality, suitable for the local culture, and attractive emotionally.

4.2.2 Reflection of Foreign Social Values and Consumption Concepts in Packaging Design

Most of the societies in the West are individualistic and promote free expression, equality, etc. As a result, in their daily lives, they have constantly sought differentiation and trendiness through aesthetic means. Consumers use the packaging of goods to express their sense of self and style. In the west, ecological awareness has increased recently and thus, the industry has started to build environmentally friendly products. Minimalist structural engineering, the combination of biodegradable polymers and transparent recycling narratives have been popular for a long time and are now required in Design.

5. Integration and Development Trends of Cultural Connotations and Aesthetic Values in Chinese and Foreign Packaging Design

5.1 Cross-Cultural Hybridization in the Context of Globalization

The paradigm of globalisation has created an extremely open environment for design languages, and as a result, there is a trend of cultural hybridisation in packaging. Designers live in a borderless world of visuals and use various cultural codes from all over the place to create culturally diverse works[4]. For many foreign enterprises, this is to adapt their brands locally and adjust them based on different cultures in China and abroad. At the same time, many Chinese brands have also started to integrate the new wave of design in China.

5.2 The Imperative of Sustainable Paradigms

With the deepening of the ecological crisis, the concept of environmental protection is being reshaped in different areas of all corners of our lives. Both China and other countries are moving in the direction of closed-loop, circular design. The new materials should be made of post-consumer recycled (PCR) plastic, biodegradable substrates and renewable resources. At present, the shape of Design is being reformed to reduce space requirements and waste of materials. Therefore, a new kind of “green aesthetics” has appeared that is open, rough in texture, and considers the life cycle of things.

5.3 Affective and Bespoke Design Trends

With the rise of post-industrial consumption, more and more people want personalised and emotional packaging. Now, packaging is no longer just for wrapping things; through psychology, it can be used to tell stories that appeal to different people and give different groups different experiences [5]. With the spread of digital variable printing, augmented reality (AR) and smart packaging technologies, mass personalisation is now possible to meet people’s desire for unique products, and narratives and nostalgia can also be embedded to increase brand loyalty.

6. Conclusion

Based on the systematic comparison of China and other countries’ packaging design, it can be concluded that packaging serves as a way for cultures to express themselves and convey emotions. The differences in aesthetic systems and visual strategies of China and other parts of the world’s design are often due to their own histories, cultures, beliefs, lifestyles, etc. Packaging Design in the modern world has become cross-cultural, environmentally friendly and emotionally intelligent customisation. Moving forward, the discipline needs to integrate the inheritance of indigenous culture with the Design language of the world. By making sustainable innovation the priority and meeting the subtle psychological needs of consumers, designers can combine cultural richness with a sense of modern style to promote the continuous development of the world’s packaging industry.

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