

The Value of Chinese Calligraphy Artistic Symbols in the Packaging Design of Creative Products

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Abstract: Cultural and creative products play an important role in promoting social and economic development. China's traditional art culture is not only indispensable in the development of its own cultural and creative products, but also an important source of inspiration and materials of international cultural and creative industries. Cultural and creative products are not only the exchange and common development of Chinese culture in other countries, but also further promotes the response to the policy of "The Silk Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" and "Building a Community with a Future for Humanity." Chinese calligraphy are a huge part of Chinese art and culture. In this paper, the cultural and artistic value of Chinese characters on packaging design was studied through case study and visual analysis. The analysis is mainly based on the current situation, problems, and innovative exploration of various elements of Chinese calligraphy and artistic symbols in the packaging of creative products. Because of the design and development of the artistic symbols of Chinese characters, the significance of the research results not only display the unique cultural heritage of China, but also provide reference for cultural and artistic exchanges, innovative development, and integrated development of other countries.

Keywords: Cultural and creative products; Chinese culture and art; Chinese calligraphy; Artistic symbols; Packaging design; Integrated development

Online publication: May 31, 2023

1. Introduction

Packaging design not only drives the innovative development of cultural and creative products, but also is an important part of visual communication. In view of the rapid economic development, there has also been a new development trend in packaging design. As we all know, Chinese culture and art are profound and colorful, and the Chinese characters, which record the evolution of Chinese tradition, are also the core of Chinese culture. In packaging design, artistic symbols not only play an important role in conveying information, but also has great significance in highlighting the creativity of product packaging. Through the exploration of the symbolic elements of Chinese characters and calligraphic art forms, through case studies, visual analysis, and other research methods, this paper aims to study the value of Chinese calligraphy in packaging design, analyze the current situation and problems of art symbols in the packaging of creative products, and explore the innovative aspects of each element. The research results are not only displays China's unique cultural heritage, but also expected to provide reference for cultural and artistic exchanges, innovative development, and integrated development of other countries.

2. The current situation of Chinese cultural and creative products

The purpose of designing cultural and creative products is to spread culture and information and generate social and economic benefits at the same time ^[1]. It is an indispensable part of today's social, economic and cultural development. In order to achieve this goal, countries all over the world attach great importance to the production and promotion of cultural and creative products. Generally, some relevant cultural elements will be added to meet consumers' needs while displaying the charm of national cultural characteristics ^[2]. In recent years, cultural and creative products has gradually become increasingly popular, and cultural elements have been added onto various products, such as packaging, daily necessities, and souvenirs, which are very representative, especially the packaging design of creative products. In the era of industrialization, with the improvement and change in people's consumption levels and habits, high-quality cultural and creative products are not limited to meeting physical needs, but also spiritual needs. If people see a souvenir on the bookshelf or a product embodying the characteristic culture of their hometown at other places, their emotions would be aroused and it would bring back memories ^[3], which is the role and significance of cultural and creative products. That is to say, the design of cultural and creative products, including their elements and applications, are closely linked with the connotation, and meaning it is expected to convey. Only when the two are integrated and symbiotic more valuable and meaningful cultural and creative products be created. Among cultural and creative products, product packaging is the most prominent and popular. Such as packaging bags, boxes, canvas bags, etc. This paper takes the packaging design of cultural and creative products as the main research object. Besides, the current situation and problems of the packaging of cultural and creative products in China are analyzed, in order to analyze the value of the artistic symbols in the Chinese calligraphy in the packaging design of creative products. This opens up new ideas for the design of cultural and creative products in the future, and provide reference for the development of cultural and creative design, cultural exchange between different countries, and the promotion of integrated development. After all, China's traditional cultural elements are rich enough to achieve the goal of promoting economic development with cultural heritage.

3. Conceptual description of Chinese calligraphy art and artistic symbols

In the initial stage of Chinese characters, the art of calligraphy was created, which was first reflected in the oracle bone inscriptions. From this point on, the characters were produced. The oracle bone inscriptions and other characters are not complete in the eyes of modern people, so they are also known as hieroglyphs, that is, the general name of a class of descriptive symbols. At the beginning, the characters only showed a relatively chaotic concept, but after more than a thousand years of development and transformation, Chinese characters in different periods have displayed the corresponding characteristics of those times and humanistic values, forming calligraphy that is unique to different historical periods ^[4]. From the beginning of the emergence and development of the art of calligraphy and design, although the structure of the characters has been split and reorganized, the art of calligraphy emphasizes on the expression of the inner meaning and spirit in the design and creation, highlighting the unique way of thinking in China. Besides, the purpose of design is strong, whether it is packaging design, graphic design or logo design, which is systematic and regular. The cultural connotation of calligraphy has been continuously expanding, because it is also a symbolic form of the art of writing ^[5].

4. Graphical application of Chinese calligraphy art symbols in design

Chinese culture is 5000 years old, and throughout the long history of its development, Chinese characters are the aspect of Chinese culture ^[6]. Chinese characters represent and records the development of Chinese culture. Chinese characters are the earliest hieroglyphs, also known as pictorial characters. Former Soviet scholar, Easterlin, once said that primitive art is an important source of drawing and writing ^[7]. Text is a

graphical element [8]. This point of view has proved the connection between Chinese characters as traditional artistic symbol elements and artistic creation. Calligraphy is an artistic form of writing Chinese characters, the most representative symbolic expression, and has high philosophical and artistic value in China [9].

Chinese calligraphy, as the most important part of Chinese culture, has also been prominently applied in the field of design in recent years. It not only represents China's unique cultural elements, but also plays an indelible role in China's cultural heritage and cultural exchanges. For example, many of the works of Jin Daiqiang, a prominent figure in Chinese design, are based on the artistic elements of Chinese calligraphy (**Figure 1**), and he used calligraphic characters as graphic elements. This work is a creative design based on the prototype of the Chinese character “*Jing*” (京) during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, incorporating the elements of traditional Chinese calligraphy. Graphics is one of the main medium of visual communication in graphic design and packaging design. Graphics should not only reflect the overall information and meaning of the designed object, but also achieve transformation and innovation through the object. In this way, the audience or consumers can understand the design purpose of the work at a glance, and at the same time. Graphics should also help enterprises establish a good corporate image and lay a foundation for the long-term development [10]. Jin Daiqiang's design takes Chinese characters as graphics, and hopes to create innovative development of design through the integration of traditional Chinese art and cultural elements with western modern design ideas. His design idea of integrated development has influenced many young designers, and even the whole direction of Chinese design. More and more designers have begun to pay more attention on combining Chinese cultural elements with western design. This idea has been incorporated into more and more modern packaging design, brand design, poster design, logos, and other designs. Among the elements of the Chinese cultural designs, the most important element is Chinese traditional calligraphy.



Figure 1. Jin Daiqiang's Chinese calligraphy elements designs [11]

4.1. Case study and visual analysis

4.1.1. Embodiment of different calligraphic art symbol elements in the packaging of cultural and creative products

Since ancient times, text has been an important medium for communication and effective transmission of information, and this also applies to packaging design. The use of text is not only as a key to explaining product attributes, but also as a way to convey visual graphic symbols [12]. As an artistic symbol, text can break through the restrictions of time and space on information transmission in packaging design, effectively combine different information, and display the attributes of goods from different angles. Chinese characters are rich and colorful under the influence of thousands of years of history, where different fonts display different cultures. Chinese calligraphy is a unique way of writing Chinese characters, and it is also a visual art developed in the process of writing characters [13]. The calligraphic style of Chinese calligraphy

can be divided into five categories - seal character, official script, regular script, running script, and cursive script, which will have different effects when presented in different packaging designs.

4.1.2. “Zhuan” calligraphy in packaging design

“Zhuan” calligraphy is the closest to “pictographic” in traditional Chinese calligraphy, and also the most primitive form of Chinese calligraphy since the oracle bone inscription. As shown in **Figure 2**, the main elements of the design are based on the seal script, which presents the cultural connotation and history, while being more standardized and in line with modern aesthetics and applications. Chinese culture and heritage can be displayed through packaging design using Chinese calligraphy.

The packaging elements in **Figure 2** is “In the deep mountains and old forests, between the rocks and rocks. The mountains, clouds, old trees, and the natural land of fairy grass.” (For YOPAI’s packing design)



Figure 2. “Zhuan” calligraphy art symbols in packaging design [14]

4.1.3. “Kaiti” calligraphy artistic symbols in packaging design

The artistic symbols in “Kaiti” calligraphy can be used in design, and it shows a sense of simplicity and the strong charm of traditional Chinese culture in the product packaging. **Figure 3** shows an award-winning work in the 2022 Platinum Creative Design Competition. A modern calligraphic font in “Kaiti” calligraphy, which uses the *Xingkai* style handwriting of Li Hai, a handwriting master in Foshan, Guangdong, China, as a reference for the structure of the potential, and uses the one move of Foshan Yongchun to embody the visual design of one stroke and one painting. Through the combination of martial arts and calligraphy, modern design methods, and new technological means, the lost *Wulin* will be recreated in the digital era. “Kaiti” is applied to product packaging to highlight the feeling of combining modern and ancient simplicity.



Figure 3. “Kaiti” calligraphy art symbol elements in packaging design (2022 Platinum Creative Design Works)

4.1.4. “Lishu” calligraphy artistic symbols in packaging design

As shown in **Figure 4**, the packaging design of an underwear brand in China is mainly based on “Lishu” calligraphy, with some changes in the font shape while retaining the traditional aesthetic significance of

China. Modern elements are added into the packaging design to make it better. The design symbol element, “*Lishu*” calligraphy, is a traditional style that is evolved from “*Kaiti*” calligraphy, which is thicker than “*Kaiti*” calligraphy. The innovative design therefore combines not only the characteristics of traditional calligraphic strokes and their intrinsic meaning, but also the brand concept, which is a form of design that is common in cultural and creative products. The extension design is displayed in the form of different symbolic elements in the brand packaging design, and the design meaning is conveyed by the brand packaging.



Figure 4. “*Lishu*” calligraphy artistic symbols Chinese youth underwear brand design [15]

4.1.5. Cursive calligraphy and “*Xing*” calligraphy artistic symbols in packaging design

Cursive script and “*Xing*” calligraphy can reflect different styles with strong personal artistic sense. The art of “*Xing*” calligraphy starts from the designer’s own feelings and experiences. Its calligraphy style is freer and more random. The art of “*Xing*” calligraphy is also the closest to the modern writing style. Therefore, when it is used as a design element symbol in the application and design, the viewer can usually feel a strong Chinese ancient style. By incorporating this element into modern brands, packaging or graphic elements will also feel the spark of combining different styles of modern and traditional art. **Figure 5** shows a milk tea brand that is favored by young people in China — “*Chayan Yuese*”. The brand portrays different tastes and brand characteristics through different packaging styles, traditional calligraphy elements, and different illustration forms.



Figure 5. “*Xing*” calligraphy artistic symbols - Creative packaging design [16]

Cursive calligraphy is one of the newer writing forms in the traditional calligraphy art, and it is also one of the calligraphy forms that is most easily incorporated into any design. As shown in **Figure 6**, the design is in the form of handwriting and painting, which is derived from ancient Chinese characters, and relevant or meaningful elements were incorporated into the Chinese characters. The main vision of the gift box adopts the artistic form of calligraphy and painting and creates a new spring atmosphere through Chinese characters and pictures. The designer embedded a tiger, the landmark of Hubei into the three Chinese characters of “*yiyouliao*.” Therefore, this design incorporates Chinese characters, painting, and traditional Chinese art.



Figure 6. Cursive calligraphy art symbols of Packaging design ^[17]

The above designs are all based on different types of traditional calligraphy. Different traditional calligraphy will display different styles, convey different messages, and different stories of brands ^[18]. Through analyzing different designs, we found that despite being able to display Chinese culture, the use of calligraphy in designs still lack layers. To popularize Chinese design and culture so that it is in line with the trends in the world of design, we must keep pace with the times and integrate elements of current design and fashion trends, so as to make the designs more innovative while preserving the traditional Chinese culture and style ^[19]. Chinese brands should continue to be enriched, and Chinese cultural and creative brands should be further developed. In this process, the development of brand packaging, logo, poster, and other designs that convey the products’ stories with visual symbol elements is extremely important.

4.2. Integration of Chinese calligraphy and other text in packaging design

Elements like English letters can add a modern feel to the design. Different fonts portray different feelings. The characteristics and purpose of a product can be reflected through packaging design. Therefore, when using the visual element of text to convey the visual language, designers should also have a deep understanding of the attributes of the product and clearly display the product name, ingredients, efficacy, and other information. The selection and decoration of the font is crucial in a design, and the position and size of the informative text should be coordinated, and the position of the brand name is also important ^[20]. Chinese characters are extensive and profound, and many characters have multiple meanings. Therefore, there is a lot of room for creative designs, with great meaning. Therefore, using texts in the packaging of creative products will break the chains of traditional design and create a new direction for packaging design.

The combination of Chinese and English texts will present different design styles, which is not only the integration of an innovative form of art and cultural symbols, but also the innovation of design development direction. Designs with only traditional Chinese characters or English words may result in a simplistic design. The use of text is an important trend of design, especially in the packaging design, where a combination Chinese and English is more popular. The combination of different aesthetics and elements

can produce different effects. This will not only make the text symbolization clearer, but also promote cultural exchange, mutual learning, and mutual development. As shown in **Figure 7**, the integrated style of design is presented, which is lively and interesting.



Figure 7. Combination of Chinese and English fonts in packaging design

5. Chinese calligraphy artistic symbol in packaging design

Chinese characters are not only the symbol of culture, but it also conveys the meaning and purpose of the product. Therefore, to promote the integration of eastern and western cultures, the development of cultural and creative products is particularly important. In the future, we should pay more attention to the combination of Chinese and Western culture and elements in the design of cultural and creative products. This not only promotes cultural exchange and integration, but also economic development. It is also possible to open up a new era of design, with the integrated development of symbols and patterns.

At present, the patterns and colors of traditional cultural symbols has been used as references in China's visual communication design, such as brand design, packaging design, and other design elements. Traditional cultural symbols represent the spiritual state and connotation of a country or region. Instead of superficial patterns and colors, designers should explore the deep connotation, such as the highest quality and deepest traditional culture, which is bound to be dominated by traditional calligraphic art symbols. Traditional cultural symbols represent people's aesthetic concepts and spiritual sustenance. Integrating them into the design can greatly enhance the audience's visual experience and allow them to resonate with the designs ^[21].

6. Conclusions

As one of the important carriers of visual symbols, packaging design act as a communication tool in cultural and creative products, but also the creative exploration of Chinese culture and traditional elements. Nowadays, the cultures of all countries in the world are constantly communicating, blending, learning, and developing from each other, Chinese characters are also an important design element and the basis for the innovative development of cultural heritage. Therefore, in China's culture and design, Chinese calligraphy is very important for the development of creative product packaging. It is also an important breakthrough for the continuous exploration of Chinese traditional design elements and Chinese culture and design in the future. Therefore, it is a topic worthy of further research for the integration of culture around the world.

Funding

Training of Advertising Creative Talents in the Artificial Intelligence Environment (2021-ZDJH-297)

Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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