Symbol Condensation and Design of Cultural & Creative Products in Regional Cultural Context

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Abstract: The attractiveness of cultural & creative products on spreading and "recurring" regional culture is the key to the shaping of urban culture. In this paper, starting from the differences of regional cultural contexts, we discussed the explicit culture and implied culture in cultural symbols and put forward new ideas on regional cultural context reconstruction and symbol condensation and conversion. The symbolic design of cultural & creative products in the cultural context of Spring Festival education in Xi'an was taken as an example here, and the method proposed herein was further clarified through cultural context reconstruction of "Yanta Praying" activity and symbolic design of educational & cultural products.

1 Introduction

"Culture is the sum of material wealth and spiritual wealth created in the course of the historical development of human society"^[1]. As cultural products, cultural & creative products also refer to all products including positive results of people transforming the world and non-natural products of cultural value. They mainly reflect the regional cultural characteristics and have practical or ornamental use with certain artistic creativity.

The attractiveness of cultural and creative products on spreading and "recurring" regional culture is the key to the shaping of urban culture. Cultural & creative products, as the carrier of regional culture, should focus on the differences in the material, culture, and other aspects of the region^[2] if we study from the perspective of communication. In this paper, we start from the differences of regional cultural contexts. By characteristic condensation of regional symbols, cultural & creative product symbols with distinct regional characteristics are formed.

2 The development status of cultural & creative products highlighting regional cultural characteristics

Regional cultural characteristics are the source for designing cultural and creative products. The aim of "passing on and inheritance" of culture must be insisted during the whole process of cultural & creative products design. "Passing on" refers to the delivery of culture to people through design. "Inheritance" refers to the continuity of cultural evolution and development in design, the creation of new cultures, and the ability of

meeting the changing needs of people in design. It is not simply an imitation of traditional things.

A Washi tape, named "I know" (a positive answer by an emperor), is a cultural & creative product of Taipei Palace Museum. It not only evoked the love of customers on Taipei Palace Museum's souvenirs, but also led the design trend of cultural & creative products^[3]. In terms of exhibition, display, and promotion of cultural & creative products, the cultural context of the Palace Museum is further emphasized to facilitate visitors interpreting the "cultural stories" implied by these products. Purchasing motivation of customers is therefore stimulated in this cultural context. Meanwhile, shaping and spreading of the tourism cultural characteristics of the Palace Museum as well as the symbol of "the Palace Museum culture" can be greatly promoted^[4].

3 Regional cultural symbols

3.1. Explicit and implied culture in cultural symbols

By putting forward the Iceberg Model of culture, Edward Twitchell Hall, Jr., an American anthropologist, suggested that culture is similar to an iceberg. He proposed that culture has two components and that only the precious small part is easily visible, called explicit culture, which can be expressed in official languages including images and words. The interlayer and subconscious layer are implied culture above the iceberg and below the surface of water. However, traditional implicit culture cannot be perceived through senses but by sensory integration. As a comprehensive response to individual cognition of objective symbols, implicit culture needs to be interpreted in a specific context to

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generate cultural resonance due to no concrete forms^[5].

3.2. Concretion of visual symbols in regional cultural context

Culture is a general language. Visual symbols constitute visual language, and cultural context counts on visual and sensory cognition. In transmission or dissemination, the meaning of symbols is of vital importance. Chuang Tzu mentioned in the External Part that "words are used to deliver thoughts, and once you understand the thoughts, the words can be forgotten". Culture emphasizes its shape and meaning, while it contributes to and relies on cultural context. It is presented to viewers through the design of visual symbols, during which symbol condensation originates from the characteristics of regional culture and relies on its context. This is the pivot to the condensation of regional cultural symbols and the core content of product design.

3.2.1. Concise characteristics of typical historical matters

Historical culture in urban areas is composed of historical representatives, important historical events and typical historical culture, and its hidden part needs to be "objectively" discovered via materialized carriers. As we all know, cultural values differ from China to the West. The former attaches great importance to connotation in its cultural logic, where the meaning and connotation of what there is, what happens, and what can be inferred or derived from them are accumulated, refined and purified,

Figure 1. Medal Design for City Marathon

3.3. Cultural translation techniques

3.3.1. Translation of explicit features

Explicit culture in regional symbols mainly consists of some dominant visual elements, such as decorative patterns and characters of preserved cultural relics, and its material meaning can only be comprehended through visual language. Translation requires explicit cultural themes and design orientation of the creative products, in a bid to extract and process the traditional cultural symbol elements into translation messages^[5]. Meanwhile, by modern design methods, these messages can be designed and transformed into visible visual elements. For example, direct translation simulates the shape of a cultural symbol through second processing and

so as to "observe things to get images, create images to find meanings, and pursue images outside images and great images being invisible". Besides, the implements contain the aesthetic images specific to China. This determines that the "aesthetic genes" formed with the historical development of Chinese traditional artifacts are different from those of other countries. In a word, applying cultural stories condensed from the characteristics of typical historical things into cultural and creative products has become a design method for creating characteristic products.

3.2.2. Characteristics of urban buildings and related things

Historical relics, landmark buildings and their implied cultural stories are typical and highly differentiated city symbols. In existing product designs, shape grammar is used to extract shape features such as buildings and implements, and visual expression to "give meaning" to visual feature elements to form visual symbols.

3.2.3. Concise characteristics of multicultural images

Multiple image-building of city culture and cultural activities has been paid more and more attention in creative design. Combining the city symbol with the visual symbol of City Marathon, the medal design of the event has integrated the city' cultural image in the regional cultural context and can strike a chord with many people.

reconstruction, and thus directly converts basic information in cultural symbols.

3.3.2. Metaphorical translation of implicit features of cultural symbols

Language expression with figurative words is called simile, otherwise it is metaphor^[6]. Symbolic metaphor is to interpret metaphor with openness, while metaphor and tenor are in vague connection^[7]. Its basic principle is a rhetorical method in which one image replaces another without changing the original meaning. Metaphorical translation is first based on likeness in forms to find the similarity between things and design a new thing, and then on likeness in meaning to produce connotation meaning and convey the functional meaning of a product in a round-about way.

Figure 2. Translation of Xi'an Spring Festival Educational Cultural Symbols

3.3.3. Reconstruction of creative context

Both explicit culture and implicit culture are produced in a certain historical and cultural context. To translate traditional cultural connotation by a product needs not only visual transformation, but also reasonable reconstruction of the deep historical and cultural context^[8]. Along with the historical development, people's life style, customs and the ideals and beliefs they most believe in are far from the traditional. Context reconstruction has a positive effect on the transmission of texts, enabling the audience to perceive cultural genes in context.

4 Symbolic design of cultural-creative products in Xi'an Spring Festival educational culture context

Xi'an, as an ancient cultural capital, has very distinctive cultural features of the Spring Festival. However, there is still a lack of cultural-creative products that have cultural symbols of the Spring Festival and Xi'an characteristics which can be used for tourism souvenir, and the design concept of "systematization, regionalization, and symbolization" is absent in the design of cultural-creative products.

4.1.Contextual reconstruction and analysis of Xi'an Spring Festival educational culture

Xi'an served as the capital of 13 dynasties in Chinese history, including the Zhou, Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties when China's culture was formed, unified, developed, and strengthened. It is the place where the Silk Road originated. The analysis of the cultural context of Xi'an as an ancient capital should include the above

historic background. Xi'an Spring Festival culture has distinct historical characteristics. However, Xi'an has been an education center since ancient times, especially in the Tang Dynasty, where education and culture were extremely prosperous.

Wei Xuan, a scholar in the Tang Dynasty, recorded a story in his book *Analects of Liu Yuxi*. He wrote that the activity of "Inscribing one's name on the Wild Goose Pagoda" originated from Zhang Ju, a scholar in the reign of the Emperor Zhongzong of the Tang Dynasty. Since then, scholars who passed the imperial examination would inscribe their names on the walls under the Great Wild Goose Pagoda as an honor. Master Monk Xuanzang in the Tang Dynasty, who decided not going back before he actually arrived at Tianzhu (now India) to study Buddhism. He eliminated the false and retained the true, and contributed all of his learning in Buddhism to the future generations. His experience explained the connotation that "the road to knowledge is long and arduous, only a mind of perseverance and truth seeking could help one walk far enough". These typical historical events, figures, and architectures have constituted the typical educational and cultural context of the Wild Goose Pagoda during the Spring Festival in Xi'an.

4.2.Condensation of Xi'an Spring Festival educational and cultural visual symbols

The most representative and typical activity among Xi'an New Year customs is the Wild Goose Pagoda praying. Master Xuanzang's long journey to search for the Buddhist scriptures represents "concentration and persistence" and he is also described as "the earliest Chinese scholar studying abroad" in the Tang Dynasty. In view of the educational cultural context of Xi'an's Spring Festival, "Wild Goose Pagoda Praying" is deduced.

Figure 3. Design Process of Cultural-creative Products

“Wild Goose Pagoda” in Chinese pronounces as “Yanta”, so the design element was decided as “Yanta Praying”. Through the combination of signifier and reference in Xi’an Spring Festival educational cultural

symbols, a representative and symbolic cultural symbol with Xi’an characteristics is formed, which is helpful to understand thoroughly the profound meaning of Xi’an Spring Festival educational culture, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Signifier and Reference of Xi’an Spring Festival Educational Cultural Symbols.

Context	Educational and Cultural Symbols Denotation (Signifier)	Educational and Cultural Connotations (References)
Yanta Praying	Hanging blessing card; Doing circumambulations praying; Lighting hope lamp; Setting lotus lanterns, etc.	Praying for good fortune, safety, health, success in study, etc.

With the assistance of design, the rich connotation culture of Xi’an Spring Festival educational culture will be further inherited and innovated. Therefore, the context of visual symbol of the Wild Goose Pagoda Spring Festival cultural-creation can be shaped as the context of “cultural education”. In this context, people wish teenagers progress and success in their studies by hanging blessing card, doing circumambulations praying, lighting hope lamp, and setting Lotus lanterns. Based on the context of “culture education”, the architectural elements of “Yanta Praying” were extracted as the visual symbol, and the product design of “educational blessing and academic success” was completed as follow.

Figure 4. Yanta Praying Series of Cultural-creative Products

5 Conclusion

Culture is the crystallization of human wisdom. In the highly-developed information era, cultures of different countries often collide and blend with each other. Through the analysis of the explicit and implicit applications of cultural symbols and the combination with specific ancient period and context reconstruction, cultural-creative design is done by employing different translation techniques. Only by incorporating the elements of excellent Chinese traditional culture and historical symbols into modern design, could the product be endowed with cultural features and the users experience aesthetic and spiritual promotion through the product. The cultural-creative design is used to condense the cultural symbols of praying for a success in education with Xi’an characteristics, thus creating a cultural image of Xi’an with rich inheritance of traditions in the Tang Dynasty and meeting the aesthetic taste of tourists. This is also the key to solve current problems of regional differentiation and the lack of research on local characteristics-based innovation design of cultural-creative products in China.

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