

Research on the Application of "China-Chic" Culture in Brand Visual Identity Design

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Abstract. In the brand market competition, the "China-chic" culture has become a powerful driving force in the visual image design of Chinese brands. However, the introduction of "China-chic" elements into visual design alone may result in deliberate and anachronistic marketing. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the use and effect of "China-chic" culture in brand visual identity design, so as to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of brand marketing. By selecting representative cases of brand visual image design, this paper analyzes the four paths of replication, multiplication, fission and extension to complete the visualization construction of brand image with the help of "China-chic" culture, and summarizes the current stage of "China-chic" culture application in brand visual image design. This paper also summarizes the four common characteristics of "China-chic" culture in brand visual image design. Therefore, this study is of great significance to the practice of brand visual identity design.

Keywords: "China-chic" culture; Chinese brands; brand visual identity; design path; design commonality.

1. . "China-chic" Culture and Chinese Brands

In recent years, the attention of Chinese brands has increased significantly. The popularity of Chinese brands in domestic search far exceeds that of overseas brands, and a number of old brands represented by Wuliangye and Laoganma, and new national brands such as Hua Xizi, a "national makeup" brand, have also been selected in the survey list of "2022 Foreigners' Favorite Chinese Brands", and are widely loved by domestic and foreign consumers. [1] In 2018, the emergence of "China-chic" reflected young consumers' pursuit of fashion, showing the natural return to traditional culture, which enhanced the voice of national brands in the market competition. In June 2022, Chinese government departments proposed to "explore Chinese culture, Chinese memory, old Chinese brands and other traditional cultural genes and intangible cultural heritage, strengthen research on the consumption orientation of new consumer groups, innovate consumption scenarios, and promote the building of national brands". The branding was elevated to a national strategic level.[2]

The innovative, inclusive and topical nature of the "China-chic" opens up the brand market with a visual style unique to Chinese culture, and opens up a wide space of power for culture-empowered brand visual image design. In this paper, we will discuss the background, development mode, and current situation of "China-chic" as a new trend culture and its impact on Chinese brand visual design, as well as its future potential in the international arena.

2. "China-chic" Culture and Brand Visual Image Design

Schroeder, a British scholar, pointed out that, "We live on a digital electronic world, which is based on images and aims to catch people's eyes, establish brands, create psychological common knowledge and design successful products and services." Graphics and images themselves have the effect of conveying information in an intuitive, readable, vivid and deep-rooted way, and the visual culture environment created by technological progress and the development of the information age have jointly driven the visual construction of brand image to be the inevitable result.[3]

Brand image includes visible tangible image and non-visible intangible image. The visual image of a brand is the tangible part, which is the image that consumers can observe visually or can feel

through sensory experience. It includes a series of visual parts such as brand name, logo, product appearance, packaging, advertisement, publicity and planning activities, service behavior, display environment, and application scenes. The intangible image is more of the spirit of brand culture and reflects people's emotions.[4] Brand visual image design is the most direct and powerful part of brand image construction, using graphics, images, words, colors, mascots and other abstract elements of the brand to develop a visual configuration, to achieve efficient communication of brand image and brand culture.

The standard for measuring the merit of brand visual image design is often not limited to the image itself, but also the cultural position and cultural viewpoint conveyed behind the design. While Japanese, Korean, European and American trendy brands are sweeping around the world, they are also essentially exporting their own culture to the world. Then, when Chinese culture is in line with the world, it also needs to seek a powerful way of expression, which undoubtedly boosts the combination of "China-chic" culture and brand visual design. "China-chic" was born in China and has the characteristics of Chinese culture. The character "Guo" refers to the country China and the character "Chao" represents the trendy culture with frontiers and times, especially the popular culture which is in line with the mainstream values, the demands of young people, and the general needs of the public. [5] The "China-chic" is a popular phenomenon with Chinese brands as the carrier, which can meet the expression of young consumers' personality and their pursuit of fashion and is also a natural return to traditional culture. [6] The development of the "China-chic" has provided unique inspiration and creativity for visual image design and has led to a brand visual image design with unique Chinese style, Chinese aesthetics and Chinese spirit.

2.1. Purpose and significance of the study

In this paper, we will study the application of "China-chic" culture in brand visual identity design, and explore the path of brand visual identity design through "China-chic" culture and the common features of successful cases in order to take advantage of the innovative and trendy "China-chic" culture to enhance the visual identity design of Chinese brands. The study explores the paths and common features of successful cases of brands building visual identity design with the help of "China-chic" culture in order to enhance the visual identity design of Chinese brands and strengthen its publicity at the same time, we will further explore the visual innovation path of "China-chic" in the development of Chinese brands, promote the visual communication of Chinese trend and Chinese culture, and enhance the national cultural soft power.

At a time when brand competition is becoming increasingly intense and brand awareness is growing, Chinese brands need to enhance their brand power. The demand for spiritual civilization in the consumer society and the trend of all-embracing visualization have naturally contributed to the advantages of the "China-chic" culture, making the "China-chic" a powerful engine to lead Chinese brands to the international arena. The local breakthrough of Chinese brands with the help of "China-chic" culture provides an idea of how to build a personalized visual image to enhance brand competitiveness and promote the international spread of Chinese culture.

2.2. Methodology and scope of the study

In this paper, we focus on the application of "China-chic" culture in brand visual identity design, and study the influential "China-chic" cultural theory research results and representative visual identity design results in mainland China since 2018 (the first year of "China-chic"). By using the case study method, we integrate literature and market research data to obtain information about the application of "China-chic" culture in visual image design, select brand visual image design cases with market visibility and representatives in "China-chic" practice, and explore commonalities through case analysis and comparison. Conclusions and suggestions were drawn on the application of Chinese culture in visual identity design to guide future design practice

3. Research on the Application of "China-chic" Culture in Visual Image Design

In previous studies, a large number of domestic studies have shown concern for China-chic culture and China-chic brands. From the perspective of cultural genes, Xiang Yong and Chen Leyang divided the aesthetic innovation path of the new China-chic brand into four levels: nature level, rational level, spiritual level, and context level.[7] Some scholars also regard the China-chic interest of brands as "a visual image practice", and the China-chic design from "impressions and shapes", "'object-process' and elements", and "categories and categories". The construction of brand visual symbols. [8] This paper combines the theories of both and applies them to the brand visual image, from the design side, the brand takes the "China-chic" as a visual culture and through replication, multiplication, fission and extension, the brand image completes the construction of its own visualization.

1. Replication. Replication is the appropriation and imitation of existing culture, and embedding new scenarios to achieve a new effect. It is also the driving force for the sustainable development of the "China-chic". Among them, the most representative is the museum group.

The Palace Museum in Beijing is one of the main forces of the "China-chic" and a pioneer in the branding development of Chinese museums. The Palace breaks away from the traditional display environment and the use of scenes in its brand image, integrating classical artworks into modern everyday design. The painting "A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers" on silk by the Northern Song painter Wang Ximeng, a masterpiece of ink and landscape since the Northern Song Dynasty, has endured as a classic image of the green landscapes. The Palace Museum has developed "A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers" as a cultural IP, "replicating" the aesthetic elements of traditional painting and calligraphy such as color, shape, composition, space, narrative and meaning, and "appropriating" them to new scenes such as product appearance, digital stage and multimedia interaction. Since 2018, the Palace Museum held a digital art exhibition "A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers 3.0" combining the advantages of traditional art and digital technology to create an immersive experience; in 2021, the "A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers 3.0" was held at the Palace Museum. It was upgraded to "Paint the Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains - Palace Immersive Art Exhibition" in Chongqing, presented on a 50-meter-long, 5-meter-high display wall. In 2022, the poetic drama "Poetic Dance: The Journey of a Legendary Landscape Painting", based on the artistic blueprint of "A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers", was presented on the stage of CCTV Spring Festival Gala of the Tiger. The brand IP brings the topic and heat, and returns to the Palace Museum with good brand reputation.



Figure. 1 The application of the cultural IP of "A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers"
(Photo source: www.dpm.org.cn)

2. Multiplication. Multiplication is the process of gradual increase in quantity or increase in number. The development of "China-chic" from the initial niche local brands to today's powerful "China-chic" is through the cumulative and repeated output of symbolic impressions, occupying more visual space in order to achieve a deep-rooted effect.

The first is the brand's own promotion strategy and continuous content output, using brand visual symbols to strengthen the brand image with "China-chic" attributes. When the brand visuals present their own characteristics in the consumer market and have complementary conditions, it leads to the cooperation between brands - "cross-border co-branding". This is a way to complete the borrowing of the "China-chic" culture through different aspects, and to interpret the same user characteristics from multiple brand dimensions. [9] The companies that have co-branded with the Palace Museum have spanned multiple industries such as food, clothing, and electronics. The OPPO co X Palace Blessing Open Edition, launched by the Palace and OPPO, is a headset design inspired by the Palace wall, its outer packaging box, headset body, accessories are the main color of the "Palace wall red" symbolizing good fortune, while the use of local hot stamping effect, condensed atmospheric impression of the Palace Museum and modern technology quality to match. "Cross-border co-branding" of the combined symbolic output, for both sides of the cooperation is a positive image addition, social enterprises to enhance the historical thickness of the brand, but also make the Palace Museum gradually established the brand image of "serious culture and interesting history combined". In addition, the "China-chic" brands can join forces to quickly occupy the market high ground to achieve visual breakthrough, to a large extent, also depends on the assistance of multiple "momentum", mainstream media output a large number of related programs, topics, works, business focused on the holiday marketing activities to stimulate Consumption, in the subtle accumulation of a large audience and word-of-mouth power, "China-chic" culture has been deeply rooted in people's hearts.



Figure. 2 The OPPO Enco X Palace Blessing Open Edition

(Photo source: www.opposhop.cn)

3. Fission. When the quantitative change reaches a certain level, it will inevitably cause a qualitative change and produce a fission within the "China-chic" culture. Since the one-way quantitative output cannot meet the higher communication needs, it adapts to the modern

communication environment and conditions through its own content fission, completes the design innovation and upgrade in terms of depth and system, obtains the psychological acceptance of the audience group through storytelling content, and then drives users to spontaneously socialize and share the brand information.[10] The process of quantitative change to qualitative change, the China-chic has become a typical element and a representative visual image.

On the one hand, it is the brand visual fission from old to new. The old brand refers to the national brand with certain historical precipitation and public recognition base, which was once outdated in the trend change because of its traditional and old visual image, but in the evolution of the "China-chic" to give new vitality. 2021, the century-old brand QUANJUDE Peking Roast Duck created the visual image of "Mengbao Duck". With its gold ingot-like duck beak, it signifies wealth and prosperity, and its affable design soon attracted a group of young consumers. On this basis, a series of peripheral cultural and creative products and services were launched to complement the overall image update of the store, thematic dining space design, virtual IP shaping and digital product promotion, transforming traditional dining into a fashionable life while retaining its own food culture characteristics. Previously, QUANJUDE Peking Roast Duck mainly catered to middle-aged and elderly customers, and its business growth was limited. As a driving force culturally, "China-chic" has successfully witnessed a new generation of consumer market and completed the brand renewal.



Figure. 3 QUANJUDE Peking Roast Duck Origin Store
(Photo source: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/>)



Figure. 4 QUANJUDE Peking Roast Duck Brand Image Update
(Photo source: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/>)

On the other hand, it is the fission of brand vision from fragmentation to system. Compared to the old brand through nostalgia marketing and renovation design to attract customers' strategy, the newborn trendy brand is to fashion attitude and a new narrative to rally the community. The original series of POP MART, a domestic designer toy brand, focused more on the fashionable beauty of design, and also had a joint name with Disney, Marvel, KFC and other famous international brands. Along with the popularity of "China-chic", POP MART also began to introduce content with Chinese cultural attributes. For example, the Molly West series released in 2018 is based on the image of the four apprentices in the classic "Journey to the West", and began to add traditional cultural components to the tide product system; the launch of the "Nezha Rebirth" tide series of the same name, and began to cooperate with Chinese animation IP; the various Spring Festival series like that in the year of tiger and rabbit, have contained so many representatives of the Chinese Spring Festival elements, like Kylin, Chinese knot, lion dance, cloth tiger and so on, for the long-term application of POP MART. From the initial single product to the promotion of the combination of the series, the design of designer toy has become an indispensable brand visual symbol of POP MART, through the series of "designer toy" to develop the brand narrative, to convey the fashion aesthetics of local designers and the Chinese cultural modern spirit of Chinese culture. These "designer toy" not only have the characteristics of Chinese aesthetics, but also coalesce the identity of players, who can participate in the design process and secondary creation of tide games to create an emotional bond with the "designer toy" and thus enhance their identification with the brand.



Figure. 5 POP MART "The Year of Tiger" series

(Photo source: www.popmart.com.cn)

Some scholars see the "China-chic" as "a cultural activity that uses the strategy of connecting emotional experiences." The use of emotional factors to connect communities and build a kind of

aesthetic community generates a new and powerful organizational force.[11] In the new consumer context, the "China-chic" triggers more emotional resonance of consumers through symbols and content, and old brands create the "old brand with new style", the new trend of the brand to tell a new story, no matter how far the brand deconstructs its own image, the ultimate value comes from the satisfaction of the user needs.

4. Extension. Extension is the characteristic of the new stage of "China-chic", which is no longer limited to the brand, but is integrated with the culture of more circles, connecting more scenes and cultural spirits, undertaking multiple experiences and narratives

First of all, it is reflected in the combination of "China-chic" culture and public life. The People's Daily New Media Center held a pop-up store, "There's a China-chic Museum", in Beijing's Sanlitun Tongying Center in Beijing inviting several China-chic brand partners to conduct a centralized display of China-chic products and China-chic experience activities, creating a new cultural space scene. Six thematic areas are designed around five contents: national goods, national arts, national music, national studies, and national comics. Through a variety of creative interactions and thematic performances, the concept of "Create in China, just right trend" is fully elaborated. People can revisit the Chinese comics they watched as children, listen to the music of the flying maids, watch the collective dance of the robots, try on the ancient Chinese costumes, learn the traditional handicraft skills, and enjoy the Chinese romantic time filled with Chinese style. Tradition and modernity intersect, culture and technology fuse, with the characteristics of viewable, reachable and interactive. The brands play their strengths and fully mobilize the five senses of the participants, allowing the audience to experience the Chinese brand story through immersive visits and in-depth interactions. Together with Chinese brands, the "China-chic" culture has gradually become a popular way of life for the public.



Figure. 6 "There's a Chinese Tide Museum" flash store
(photo source: <http://paper.people.com.cn/>)



Figure. 7 POP MART "In springtime it is warm, and the sun is bright" series.

(Photo source: www.popmart.com.cn)

Secondly, the culture of "China-chic" is converging with the world fashion. Along with the increasing trend of globalization, the influence of visual symbols has become more prominent in the process of cross-cultural communication. [12] In 2018, several Chinese fashion brands joined hands to carry out the "China Day" activity in New York Fashion Week, where the traditional elements of the nation and modern fashion style were skillfully combined to collectively appear in the international perspective, and the visual symbols of the "China-chic" brands began to break the inherent impression of space. In 2020, MiHoYo launched the game "Genshin Impact", which was well received by overseas players, creating a Chinese-style cultural immersion experience through the shaping of the sound and picture environment, the integration of classical music, and the setting of plot and characters, conveying the game concept and values with Chinese characteristics. High-quality China-chic game allows foreign players to realize multiple interactive overlay experiences of Chinese culture in various aspects such as game entertainment, social platform discussion, online secondary creation and realistic display performance, generating good feeling and interest in Chinese culture.[13] The "China-chic" delivers Chinese brand power in the world market while providing the aesthetic paradigm of Chinese cultural spirit for the global fashion life.

4. Research Results

The "China-chic" is a dynamic existence, and the carrier it resorts to ranges from product to brand and then to culture. The visual design styles that accompany it are very different, but the idea of design has something in common. Looking at the successful visual identity cases in the brand market, the application path of "China-chic" culture in brand visual identity design shows the following common features:

4.1. Linking users' emotional identity with redesign

"China-chic brands are human emotional carriers, emotional endorsements and symbolic symbols, and behind each China-chic brand there is a specific and clear set of persona labels and user portraits." [7] The culture of "China-chic" has its own visual language, visual logic and value concept, especially with a high degree of user inclusiveness. The visual impression of the brand has been implanted in the minds of old users, while the innovative development of traditional visuals caters to the preferences of new users. The brand usually refines and retains its core visual elements, and seeks the

connection point with the "China-chic" culture to form a new visual image, and further extends, deepens and adjusts around the user characteristics and user feedback. For example, China QUANJUDE's new IP image "Mengbao Duck" adopts a duck as the main image, which is derived from China QUANJUDE Peking Roast Duck's signature roast duck, and the color scheme also retains the combination of gold and black in the old plaque. The visual features of the duck beak, thick eyebrows and bean eyes in the form of golden Dollar also tend to be the cute style loved by young people. It can be said that the "China-chic" brand uses design to break the inter-generational differences, and the inheritance of the core visuals reflects the emotional care for the old users, while the redesign of visual images provides an optional path for the youth group's consumption expression, identity and self-presentation in the new consumer context. [14] The brand chooses to establish an intimate emotional connection with users in a more intimate, popular and targeted visual form of "China-chic", in which the brand can effectively connect with users' needs.

4.2. Visual innovation based on the integration of art and science

In the new media era, the carrier and medium of visual communication have developed in a higher dimension, the relationship between subject and object in the process of information acquisition has changed, and the efficiency and effectiveness of communication have reached an unprecedented level, and the technicality and artistry of visual communication design have been deeply integrated. [15] The digital "China-chic" has been regarded as the general trend, and the visual communication mode of "China-chic" has been innovated and upgraded accordingly. [16] The means to broaden the visual boundary of the brand of "China-chic" brand happens from the change of communication media and design language. With the screen media gradually taking over the dominant role, brands prefer a three-dimensional and dynamic brand visual system to quickly capture users' attention and efficiently disseminate information compared to the traditional flat and static communication methods. The immersive digital pavilion of the Palace Museum, the "There's a Chinese Tide Museum" pop-up store which gathers audiovisual experiences, and the online operation and real-time high-frequency interactive behaviors of the brand relying on the new media matrix are all the sub-dimensional communication and multi-dimensional interaction triggered by the media transformation. In the choice of design language, the "China-chic" brands tend to use visual narrative to convey brand values, and through the way of "storytelling" to the audience, guide the audience to spontaneously obtain information and understand information. In this way, they combine the artistic and trendy qualities of the "China-chic" culture with the application of modern science and technology to create visual designs that are rich in the spirit and quality of the times. These innovations make the brand free from a single visual presentation and tend to personalize, while the new visual style will trigger a new round of imitation and popularity, the "China-chic" visual in the art and technology, contemporary and future trends in the evolution of development.

4.3. Value output with traditional culture as the core

The "China-chic" culture is not a source of water without a foundation, its core is the excellent Chinese traditional culture and national spirit. In the excellent Chinese traditional culture, it contains visual cultural images and cultural imagery with rich connotation. For example, Chinese characters, calligraphy and painting, architecture and handicrafts, these cultural images are transformed into "China-chic" symbols through design and are widely used in the visual system of brands, as brand logos, product packaging, advertising and other brand image. The spiritual heritage, artistic realm and philosophical thoughts of traditional Chinese cultural imagery have become the foundation of the brand's founding philosophy and value orientation. For example, the technology brands Lenovo and OPPO, which are co-branded with the Palace Museum, have almost all left behind the "indoctrination" advertising output and integrated the patterns, colors and narratives of the Forbidden City into their designs to showcase their products with visual images rich in cultural content; In POP MART "In springtime it is warm and the sun is bright" series, there are many elements of traditional Chinese culture. The image of the flying sky in fresco art, "cloud", "butterfly" and "sheila" in classical

literature, "Four Gentlemen (Plum, Orchid, Bamboo and Chrysanthemum)", and the "Four Elegant Things" of ancient times, such as piano, chess, calligraphy and painting, are all incorporated into the spring scenery. Through the refinement and transformation of traditional culture, we give the trendy culture a poetic nature and convey the artistic style and aesthetic interest of traditional Chinese culture. The essence of the brand's application of "China-chic" culture lies in telling the story of Chinese brands in the Chinese way and exporting the value of Chinese culture to the world.

4.4. Adapt to the spirit of modern aesthetics of fashion communication

The "China-chic" is externalized as a cultural image that shows the fashion and creativity of the country and the nation, and internalized as a microcosm of people's lifestyle and spiritual culture.[17] Especially for the modernized interpretation of the spirit of traditional culture, actually embraces traditional culture through the aesthetics of modern life, and makes it more widely and deeply integrated with the picture of modern life by constantly widening its own boundaries. Especially in the context of multimedia, "China-chic" culture is more likely to intervene through live broadcast, film, games, short video and other forms, and China-chic products, China-chic activities and China-chic festivals with the brand's technical power and industrial concept are also accepted and consumed by the public visually, becoming part of the public's cultural life. In the process of branding, the Palace Museum was able to promote "A Panorama of Mountains and Rivers" as an IP and make it widely accepted by the public, first of all from the precise choice of traditional cultural image: the painting method of green landscape and the story of Wang Ximeng's brilliant brush added to the topicality; at the same time, adapting to the requirements of modern life aesthetics, cultural creation, games, poetry plays and digital pavilions liberated traditional art from the exhibition space of museums and combined it with public life in a more lively form, giving traditional art aesthetic meaning in modern life. In the process of combining "China-chic" culture and brand visual image, it is not a simple application of graphics, or just a profit-seeking trend, but should become the spiritual symbol of the brand. For the brand, on the one hand, it requires the application of "China-chic" culture and the brand's own construction to be self-consistent, add with the brand's industrial characteristics, blend with the brand's independent creative concept, and jointly complete the personalized shaping of the brand image; on the other hand, it requires the brand to have a precise grasp of modern fashion and inter China-chic, and adjust according to the fashion environment, time and space. On the other hand, the brand is required to have a precise grasp of modern fashion and inter China-chic, and adjust them according to the fashion environment, time and space conditions and user needs, in order to adapt to the pursuit of contemporary values, which is also the key to reconcile the ancient tendencies conveyed by the "China-chic" with the modernity required by the brand visual image.◦

5. Conclusion and Outlook

This paper focuses on the study of the "China-chic" culture from the perspective of brand visual identity design and communication. The background, development mode, current situation and international communication potential of the "China-chic" culture and its influence on Chinese brand visual identity design are explained. Based on the previous theoretical achievements and the new changes in the field of "China-chic" culture and brand visual image design, this paper sorts out four paths for brands to complete the visual construction of brand image through "China-chic" culture, namely, replication, multiplication, fission and extension. The paper further summarizes four common features of the application path of "China-chic" culture in brand visual image design, namely, linking users' emotional identity with redesign, Visual innovation based on the integration of art and science, value output with traditional culture as the core, and Adapt to the spirit of modern aesthetics of fashion communication. In this paper, it's analyzed that the "China-chic" culture has a positive role in promoting brand visual image design and a strong cultural communication value. In the future, the combination of "China-chic" culture and Chinese brands may have wider research significance in interdisciplinary, cross-industry and cross-cultural contexts.

Brand visual image design based on the contemporary nature of national culture adapts to the requirements of modern cultural communication, and as the communication power and influence of Chinese brands increase, it will feed the "China-chic" culture, enrich the visual communication methods of "China-chic" culture, and produce more excellent design results with Chinese aesthetic characteristics. The design achievements with Chinese aesthetic characteristics will show the historical tradition and aesthetic value of Chinese culture. When the trend further expands to the international perspective, the "China-chic" may rely on Chinese brands to infiltrate the global cultural soil and enhance the national cultural soft power.

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