

Traditional elements of Chinese culture in logo design

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Abstract

China is rich in traditional culture elements, which have a long history. In this paper, they are divided into patterns, words, colors and so on according to the visual performance of the elements. The paper analyzes the combination of the traditional culture elements and modern culture with its modern symbols in outstanding works and personal logo designs. This article discusses the influence of the contemporary logo design on the inheritance, innovation and development of traditional culture, as well as on the culture characteristics of the logo design. The success of these designs, which are the essence of Chinese traditional culture, with the development of the entrepreneurship and brand all around the world, shows the deep and infinite charm of Chinese culture to the world.

Introduction

The development of a successful logo is a complicated task for designers. Its optimal solution is promoted both by the qualification of the designer, and by the compliance of the logo with the culture tradition of the customer company and potential consumers of its products. The relevance of this study is based on two factors. Firstly, logo is a symbol that symbolizes a company, product or service by using letters and graphic elements. Size, color and shape are three important elements in the logo design. The second factor is that logo has a concept that should take into account cultural values, the psychology of the consumer's perception and other social factors. Simple and novel signs can be easily identified and recognized by consumers.

In the article [1] it is provided that logo symbolizes a firm, product or name of a service by using letter and image elements. Authors say that logo should reflect the firm or product's properties. Selected or designed font should be suitable for the content of the institution. The logo should be simple, easily understandable, rememberable and original. It should neither be mixed with other firms logos nor even remind them. In the article the authors outlined the methodology and stages of development of the Kastamonu University Forestry Faculty's logo design, taking into consideration dominant features of the Faculty. The developed logos were evaluated by different experts and based on their evaluation the optimal variant of the logo for the Forestry Faculty of the Kastamonu University was selected.

The paper [2] presents the importance of the logo as a graphic element to support a corporate identity. A logo is a graphic identity vector and it has its place in communication strategy of a company. It is the signature of a company. That is why it is very important to be able to create a harmony between colors and shapes concerning the variety of logos. There are two stages: the first stage is the research and market projection, and the second stage – creative graphic work. These two stages – the research and creative graphic work – have to be passed by any logo designer to obtain the best result.

Authors of the article [3] investigate the effect of the type of logo used to promote co-products. In the case of an added logo, the logos of the constituent brands are lined up next to each other. An integrative logo is composed of the elements of both original brand logos. A novel logo does not contain any element of the original brand logos. Authors found that the use of an integrative logo results in more favourable perception of brand cooperation, higher perception of co-product quality, more positive feelings and more favourable attitude towards the co-products in comparison with the use of an added or novel logo. For a novel logo of co-products, consumers reported feelings of irritation and frustration and less favourable attitude in comparison with an added logo. In the article [4] the authors conducted two experiments and tested the effects of logo complexity and influence on brand recognition and brand attitude. It was supposed that logo complexity moderates the effects of influence on logo

recognition and brand attitude, and such influence increases recognition and positively impacts the brand attitude, in particular for complex logos. The results showed that the increase of the influence led to the increase of the brand recognition and to more positive attitude, in particular for complex brand logos, suggesting short-term benefits for simple brand logos, and long-term benefits for complex logos.

The purpose of the article: The purpose of the research is to analyze the significance of the inheritance, innovation and development of traditional ethnic culture in the contemporary logo design, and the cultural characteristics of nationalization of logo design.

Materials and Methods

Materials

The purpose of these articles is to study the status quo of corporate and brand logo design. These studies emphasize the importance of the design elements of the logo. A good sign is important for the establishment and recognition of corporate or brand image in the mind of consumers. The research is based on the study and analysis of the items of Chinese material culture: dishwares, household items, national clothes, furniture and architecture elements.

Logo is a kind of transmit symbol with symbolic meaning that uses the brief image to express its meaning, and helps to develop the people's symbol recognition ability, imagination and other thinking abilities to convey a specific message [5]. Logo has a strong information transfer function, and in the ancient times, figure symbol was the medium used to convey information, which is before the characters being used many years. That is to say, the figure is the reflection of the human's thoughts, but the characters using to record human's thoughts was produced after the figure. In today's information society, under the influence of acceleration of industrialization progress and the trend of internationalization development, the corporate logo or brand logo has been injected with the concept of enterprise and brand, becoming the visual form of the enterprise or brand image, and existing in all aspects of people's life. The logos have been chosen because they contain clear visual clues of the traditional Chinese culture.

Methods

Research methodology: The methods of analysis and synthesis are used in the research. The methodology of this research is based on history-culture, socio-culture, time

sequence, retrospective methods, and historical research methods.

Scientific novelty: This paper selects modern excellent logo works and individual logo design works, in which traditional culture elements are combined with modern corporate culture to analyze, and the results of combination of culture and modern logos are analyzed. Selected representative brand is analyzed and studied from multiple categories of activity logos, corporate logos, institutional logos and product logos. These four logotypes were chosen by the author.

Results and Discussion

The Chinese Traditional Culture Elements

Chinese traditional culture and art has a long history, which has existed for thousands of years. From the original color pottery to the bright bronze ware, from the Chinese painting of splash-in Danqing and ravishing brushes, to the blue and white porcelain with good body like jade and the rich glaze color, it is too numerous to list. From the perspective of visual expression, this paper can be divided into several aspects: patterns, words, colors, and other traditional culture elements.

The patterns

Long before the characters were born, our ancestors began to use figures to convey thoughts and communication feelings. In China, the symbolic figures representing traditional culture from ancient times to the present can be divided into primitive social patterns, classical patterns, folk and custom patterns, and a few custom patterns [6]

The patterns of primitive society mainly included the patterns of human, animals as well as plants, water patterns, fire patterns, woven patterns, abstract patterns and primitive religious patterns. Many of these patterns were attached to the pottery, which were simple but vivid, mysterious and full of imagination. For example, the new Stone Age painted pottery and cliff stone carving showed our ancestors' mastery and the fear and control of nature, which also became one of the earliest figures arts in China. In the archaeological discovery of our country, the Hemudu historic site in the Neolithic Age (more than seven thousand years ago), unearthed a large number of figures similar to the Yin Yang fish, which were known as the earliest prototype of Yin Yang fish figure by modern people.

The "A human face with a fish body" (Fig.1) basin was made by the Banpo clan living in the present xi'an area. Banpo clan was mainly living on fishing and hunting, because of the

worship of the sun and fish totem, and the facial features of sun, fish and human became the main totem style of Banpo clan, the two bilateral symmetry fish like the human's ears having echoes of the tail combined with the face's lips and headdress, the style and the black and white color combined coordinately, so that the figures were the prototype of the tai chi Yin Yang fish.



Figure 1: A human face with a fish body basin [7]

The Hemudu culture, discovered in Yuyao city, Zhejiang province, was about 7,000 to 5,000 years ago. The Hemudu historic site unearthed a large number of varieties of art, so it can be seen that the ancients believed in and worshiped the phoenix bird, and a lot of decorative pattern was the combination of birds and the sun, and the emblazonry of one of the exquisite culture relics "ivory carving the double phoenix faced the sun", which vividly reflected the ancestors' worship of the robins and the shining sun after the original agriculture was invented (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Ivory carving the double phoenix faced the sun [8]

The original color pottery was the most systematic and complete material cultural product in the prehistoric civilization. In particular, in the late Neolithic period, with the appearance of colored pottery, people painted images on pottery consciously, and the materials from animals to plants, which were inseparable from people's living environment. The basic elements points in the decorative pattern of original color pottery were point, line and space. These seemingly simple patterns were endowed with plentiful constitutive language

by the original inhabitants, such as repetition and balance, contrast and unity, rhythm and rhyme, conformal and inversion. The points, lines and spaces in the various forms of expression by the hands of the original inhabitants, leave us with an infinite variety of colored pottery works. There works were full of the original residents' reverence for nature, the yearning for a better life, and the daily record of production and life, which had exerted a profound influence on the inheritance and development of traditional aesthetics.

The classical pattern refers to the pattern that has been preserved from the ancient inheritance, which is supported by bronze ware, lacquer ware, clothing, tile, porcelain and so on. For example, the Taotie pattern (Figure 3), Yun-lei pattern (Figure 4), Fish pattern, Tiger pattered were all symbols of bronze pattern [6].



Figure 3: The Taotie pattern [9]

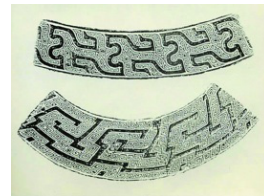


Figure 4: Yun-lei pattern [9]

And in another carrier, the Chinese porcelain, its design was more plentiful, which included tidy and exquisite elaborate-style painting, as well as the splash-ink painting of great momentum, and one of the most prestigious Chinese traditional decoration pattern was the twine lotus (Fig.5). In the Chinese folk, at the same time of production and living, in order to beautify and enrich life, people also created many folk patterns, like embroidery, printed cloth, paper cutting, New Year pictures, and decorated patterns and so on. These folk and custom patterns were a vivid portrayal of the people's daily life, which contains the auspicious meaning of the ancient people's life, and had a strong decorative nature. For example, the Flower Mission (Fig.6) in the folk paper-cut was the symbol of the ancients' expectation of "reunion, perfect and complete" of life, which had been passed down to the present day.



Figure 5: To wrap a lotus flower pattern [10]



Figure 6: The Flower Mission [11]



Figure 7: Manchu's Cheongsam, Uyghur's Qiapan, Mongolian's Robe, Image source (left to right): [12], [13], [14]

Chinese character

Chinese characters are by far the longest continuous use of words, and the earliest unearthed cultural relics related to characters were more than 7700 years ago, which were the only inheritance character each character's system in ancient times, and Chinese characters were the official characters in Chinese history. Chinese characters are hieroglyphs, and traditional calligraphy is written by calligraphy with typical oriental cultural implication. The evolution of the generalized Chinese characters is from Carapace-bone-script, Bronze Inscriptions, Large Seal Script, Small Seal Script, Clerical Script, Regular Script, Weibei, Cursive Script, running script, Song Typeface (as well as derivative works), etc. (Fig.8). In the narrow sense, it refers to the standard written forms of Chinese characters from the Tang dynasty, and also the modern Chinese characters commonly used today [15]. There are various types of character fonts that are suitable for typography, and the basic font are the "Boldface "and" Song typeface". The "Song typeface" was the font that appeared in the woodblock printing in the Ming dynasty. Originally in re-marking the Lin'an book sheds, strokes were linearized, and presented a tough expression, and it is in the Mo-tse, being inscribed in Jiajing 32 (1553) the basis of song typeface had been formed [16]. Although the song typeface was named after song typeface, it was born in the Ming dynasty (Fig.9).



Figure 8: Carapace-bone-script, Bronze Inscriptions, Large Seal Script, Small Seal Script, Clerical Script, Regular Script, Weibei, Cursive Script, running script [17]



Figure 9: Song Typeface [17]

The song typeface is "horizontal Thin and vertical thick". According to the existing Chinese ancient engraving forms, the book version of ancient book was usually cut along the vertical section of the trunk, which is the same direction as the carved wood fiber, so it was not easy to be cut down. However, the vertical painting of the characters and the carved wood fiber were at right angles, so it was easy to be cut down, and therefore the font before and after the Wanli was 'horizontal Thin and vertical thick' [18]. There are two main types of song typeface in the Wanli period, of which the more common type was longer, and the "horizontal Thin and vertical thick" was more obvious, like the Thirteen Classics in North JianBen in Wanli. The other type of song typeface still continuing the characteristics of Suzhou area in Jiajing period was straight, and the font is square, such as the book of Rites glosses in Wanli period [19].

At the end of Ming dynasty, there are still two types of song typeface. More kinds of forms were also longer, which were longer and narrower than the type of song typeface in the Wanli period, such as the later Chong Zhen's Mr. Song chu's famous minister's words and records. The other kind of character was relatively flat, such as MAO's Kigu Ge engraving word south history. In the Qing dynasty, the song typeface was further developed, and the style of Qing dynasty gradually formed after the middle of KangXi's reign. The most obvious feature of the style of the song typeface at that time was squarer than that of the late Ming and early Qing dynasty, which was closer to the printed body that we are familiar with later. By the time of Qianlong period, the song typeface had been nearly fixed, which started and finished with the triangular and vertical strokes, were basically the same as that of the modern one [19].

The Colors

The use of color in the Chinese nation can be traced back to the Paleolithic age of primitive society (3 million years ago to about 10000 years ago), and from this period of the archaeological findings you can see that the primitives at that time used hematite powder extracted from natural to dye clothes as well as the red powder to spread all around the death of relatives. Chinese prefer warm colors, especially red and gold. In the concept of Chinese, red is the symbol color of auspicious festival, for example, the gate of red paint, red wall of the Forbidden City, the pillars of red paint, moreover, especially during the feast and the marriage, the application of the red is more common. The "Red Dowry"(Fig.10) is the description of the marriage, from Xijiao to bedding, clothing and footwear, jewelries and sewing supplies, and red dowry team often extends from the women's family to the husband's home, as if a golden dragon wore Dahongpao,

permeating with auspicious festive, showing off wealth rich, therefore it calls the "Red Dowry". Moreover, the red couplets, red paper cuts and etc, has penetrated into every Chinese heart after thousands of years of inheritance, and the Chinese red has become the soul color of Chinese.



Figure 10: Red Dowry (partial) [20]

Besides red is the favorite color of Chinese people, yellow also has the supreme status in the hearts of Chinese people. Since Tang dynasty, yellow was only used by the royal family, and in the traditional concept, "yellow" and "emperor" pronounces same but spell differently, which is a symbol of imperial power, and because yellow color is close to gold color, it is also a symbol of wealth and fortune. Therefore, the color of the imperial palace since the Song dynasty had been becomes the yellow glazed tiles and the red courtyard walls had been used until the late feudal society. Under the sun, the yellow glazed tile is glistened by the sun, and the red courtyard is very solemn, which is the symbol of supreme power and wealth, as well as the status symbol that ordinary people couldn't reach (Fig.11).



Figure 11: The Palace Museum [21]

The Other Traditional Cultural Elements

Traditional Chinese cultural elements are diverse, and some are familiar traditional visual symbols, or a style, or a kind of behavior, or an idea. For example, traditional architectural modeling, Chinese painting, seal cutting, drama, martial arts, knitting, wine making, diet, tea ceremony, religious belief, philosophy and so on. Each element has its own traditional culture representative symbol, which is the huge treasure house of Chinese culture, and provides supplies for designers to create and to build the cultural foundation of the design style with its own cultural characteristics.

The Application of Traditional Chinese Culture Elements in Modern Logo Design

Contemporary enterprise or brand logo design not only focuses on innovation, but also pays more attention to cultural inheritance. At present, the logo of the enterprise and the logo of the brand are the visual business cards of the world. Chinese traditional culture is the precipitation of the wisdom and experience of the predecessors, which is the essence of culture that has been verified for thousands of years. Traditional culture is the root of the Chinese nation, for the inheritance of traditional culture is the development, and there is no tradition of innovation as no foundation of the building, and the creative design is the inheritance and innovation of culture. Under the soil of traditional culture, the logo design with Chinese cultural characteristics emerges endlessly, and the Chinese traditional culture is presented to the design in a visual symbol. As an example, the article provides the results of logo development, which are based on the elements of Chinese culture. They are chosen because they contain clear visual clues of the traditional Chinese culture and they have been referred to as successful logotypes by well-known sources.

The Analysis of Chinese Cultural Elements in the Emblem Design of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (Fig.12).

The emblem of Olympic Games in 2008, dancing Beijing, its overall shape of the form is a "Chinese seal", and its details are composed of three parts: the first part is the variant Chinese character "Jing" written by the Chinese calligraphy, variant figure combined with dance movements, forming the modeling of jumping and dancing, and is in the form of intaglio present in the Chinese seal (Fig.13); the second part is the "Beijing" and "2008" written by the writing brush; the third part is the Olympic rings. This logo adopts the layout of Zhu Wenjin's composition art, which shows the feeling of stable and shows great nation style. The logo not only reflects the charm of Chinese seal carving but also conveys the

brief process and unadorned beauty of Chinese traditional writing. The color of the logo chooses Chinese red, conveying the friendship, sincerity and enthusiasm of the Chinese nation. The design of the Olympic emblem is dynamic, primitive and vivid, showing both the profound heritage of ancient civilization and the modern Beijing that is full of youth. The stretching of calligraphy combined with the spirit of the Olympic Games, meaning "faster, higher, stronger", which not only is the first Chinese city in the history of the Olympic, but also is the perfect combination of Chinese civilization and the modern sports spirit, presenting the Chinese ancient civilization and modern temperament to the people of the world perfectly.



Figure 12: The emblem of Beijing Olympic Games [22]



Figure 13: The Chinese seal [23]

The Analysis of Chinese culture Elements in the Logo of China Unicom Company

The company logo of China Unicom was developed from the pattern of “Panchang”, (Fig.15) which is an auspicious graph in ancient China. Panchang, representing the buddhist eight treasures, is woven from simulated ropes, and the pattern is joined together, without head nor tail, without end, implies long-standing, well-established and forever auspicious, so it is called “Panchang”. The line is endless, and the symbol is endless too. The “Panchang” figure is a symbol of China Unicom’s orderly, unimpeded and unfettered communication as well as the endless of China Unicom’s career. The logo has two distinct connected “hearts”, which show the communication and the service tenet of China Unicom, meaning that it will always be for the user’s sake and connect with the user’s heart [24].



Figure 14 (left): The logo of China Unicom Company [25]
 Figure 15 (right): Panchang [26]

The choice of color is bright Chinese red and national flag color, represent enthusiastic, unrestrained and alive, which are the most representative color of China complex. The red color that symbolizes happiness and good fortune increases the affinity of corporate image and gives people a strong sense of visual impact, which is consistent with dynamic, innovative and fashionable enterprise positioning. The characters choose Shuimo black: the most inclusive color and full of cohesive force, which is the symbol of nobility and steady. The red and black collocation has steady, harmonious and tensile visual aesthetic feeling [27].

The red double “I” in English like two people communicating anytime or anywhere, which highlight the “let all freedoms connected” spirit of the brand, constitute the auspicious ear shape subtly in the vertical combination, and strengthen the Unicom image in customers’ mind with good fortune as well as happiness. “I”: its pronunciation is the same as “love” in Chinese, extending the brand concept of “hearts connected and communication connected”; In English, “我” means “I” and “信息” means “information” catering to the “customer-centric” marketing model as well as the general idea of brand marketing “providing integrated communication and information services to customers” [28].

The Analysis of Chinese Culture Elements in the Logo Design of the Northeast National Historical and Cultural Research Center

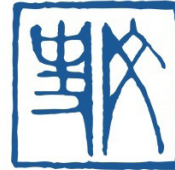


Figure 16: The logo of the Northeast National Historical and Cultural Research Center (author Liu Jiangxin, 2011)

The center for the research of the northeast national history and culture is a professional academic institution, and its logo design is one of Liu Jiangxin’s logo design works . It is conceived from the metal and stone seal, and the character of the figure is “seal character”, which means “culture” and “history”. The two characters are in center alignment visually, and the middle formation of the negative space structure based on “the northeast” characters in the seal character, with deformation of the seal character reflecting the characteristics of the research center, which shows the research objects and fields of research center. The logo is a square shape, taking the meaning of theory of “a square earth and spherical heavens”, the other means that the study of history and culture is not a single time and space, but it also covers the study of historical time and space. By the form of the seal, a solemn commitment to the results of the study was made, which was established as evidence, indicating the precise research attitude towards the culture and history.

The color of the logo chooses the cool color system, and the color of the Pulan indicates that the study is rigorous, steady and modest. When using the research center logo at academic conferences at home and abroad, it is rich in the shape of Chinese traditional seal elements, which gives the industry people a deep impression, with distinctive features and obvious cultural features.

The Analysis of Chinese Culture Elements in the “Not Discard” Creative Brand Logo Design

“Not Discard” Creation is one of Liu Jiangxin’s industrial brand design logos, and the brand mainly develops cultural and creative products, including furniture, tea sets, flower implements and so on. The concept comes from the traditional Chinese toy “Kongming lock”(Fig.18). It is also known as Lu ban lock. According to the legend, it is a kind of toy invented by craftsmen from Lu during the spring and autumn period, based on the Tenon structure of Chinese ancient architecture. It looks like a solid cube, and it is easy to disassemble but hard to assemble. In addition to demonstrating the wisdom of the Chinese ancient architecture, Lu ban lock also embodies a spirit of craftsman, the spirit of excellence and innovation. Combined with this concept, displayed the “craftsmanship spirit” of “Not Discard ” brand, the Creation strives for perfection and focuses on the quality of innovation. For every product produced, they go for perfect. The modeling element of logo uses the variant brand name “Not Discard” in Chinese and makes it three-dimensional. Set up by the horizontal and vertical lines and form the cubes outlines, to show that the brand is not blundering during the today’s process of mechanization and paying attention to craft as well as conveying the culture concept. In the logo design, Chinese characters as the main body of the modeling, the use of Chinese characters means the figure has a summary and refining idea as well as the aesthetic advantages, creates new meanings, and put the spirit of the Chinese characters into the brand image, which makes the brand more wisdom and socialized.

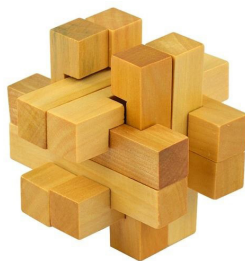
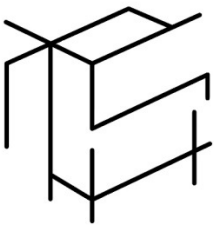


Figure 17 (left): The logo of “Not Discard” (author Liu Jiangxin, 2014)

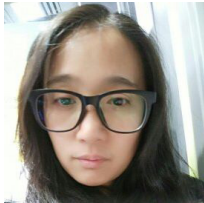
Figure 18 (right): Kongming lock [29]

Conclusions

In the application of logo design in modern China, the embodiment of the national culture elements, first of all, is a kind of the designer’s culture responsibility, which is not single, but diversified, forming a unique style, different from other culture, having a strong national spirit, turning the spirit into the visual symbols, extending the design concept as well as strengthening the visual infection. Secondly, the Chinese ancient culture at the present times is developing and changing constantly, and in a new era of constant communication between the world’s cultures, tradition will bring contemporary logo designer’s different feeling, helping them really understand and inherit our ancient civilization, grasp the core spirit of traditional culture, and then inject it into the logo design. Based on the reintegration, they can add the contemporary new form of art elements into the logo design, and create the national and cultural visual symbols conformed to the national industry and the brand. Thirdly, the application of traditional culture in the modern enterprise and brand logo design is another way to promote the culture development and spread the culture to the world. Logo is the symbol of enterprise or brand, and the development of enterprise and brand plays an important role in the spread of culture. Both in depth and breadth, it has expanded the new category for the culture development. In a word, the integration of Chinese traditional culture and logo design is a new process of inheritance, development and innovation for both brands and culture.

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