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TRENDS IN THE URBAN VISUAL IDENTITY DESIGN

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This article is dedicated to exploring the ways in which design can enhance a city's recognizability. In the current context of urban development, the development of a unique visual identity has become an essential medium through which a city can project its culture. Incorporating local cultural heritage elements as inspiration for design has become an important means of visually capturing a city's regional characteristics and showcasing its cultural distinctiveness.

Key words: *cultural heritage, city image, visual design, urban identity design trends, cultural communication.*
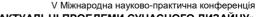
INTRODUCTION

Within the context of the prevailing trend of economic globalization, the phenomenon of urban homogenization is growing increasingly pronounced. Consequently, scholars have turned their attention towards addressing the challenge of preserving a city's cultural identity and autonomy, a topic that has garnered significant attention. In the contemporary "era of visual literacy," visual communication has emerged as a crucial means of disseminating information. Consequently, when it comes to shaping a city's image, there has been a heightened emphasis on utilizing distinctive visual symbols to craft and propagate it. There is a greater recognition of the significance of conveying the character and spiritual connotations of a city, as this serves to enhance its overall image. In a particular article [1], the significance of expressing the cultural identity of urban image cognition is explored in detail.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this article is to analyze the design manifestation of cultural heritage as a design element in urban visual identity design and to propose future design trends.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Urban visual identity design encompasses the utilization of visual elements, including graphics, colors, text, logos, and other visual cues, to convey the cultural, historical, distinctive, and branding aspects of a city. The purpose of urban visual identity design is to amplify the visibility, image, attractiveness, and competitive edge of a city.

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The structure of urban visual identity is intricate and multi-dimensional. The foundation of the urban visual identity system is the urban image, which presents the fundamental visual appearance of the city to its populace. Based on this foundation, urban designers refine the core elements of the city to construct a comprehensive city identification system that consists of urban logos, logos for urban events, and applications of the urban logo. This approach imparts rich connotations to the visual identity of the city. Notably, when considering prominent examples of successful city brands like New York, Paris, London, Rome, Barcelona, and Athens, it becomes apparent that these cities are readily identifiable due to their socio-cultural and physical characteristics [2]. The official poster collection for the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games offers valuable reference material for the design of urban visual identity.

The visual design of significant urban events needs to play a crucial role in highlighting the cultural and regional characteristics of a city, serving as a key component of urban visual identity design. China, being a country rich in cultural heritage, has representative cultural heritage across various regions and cities, which in turn are an important material for expressing urban image. Increasingly, urban designers are seeking inspiration from local cultural heritage to infuse their designs with visual elements such as graphics, colors, text, and symbolic meanings, thereby reinforcing the city's cultural concept.

In July 2021, the Asian Games Organizing Committee organized a global poster design competition, attracting submissions from numerous regions and countries. Following a meticulous evaluation process conducted by the judges, 42 official Asian Games posters were selected, with many of them incorporating design elements of Hangzhou's cultural heritage in their visual content and messaging.

As depicted in Figure 1, both poster designs effectively incorporate the distinctive geographical and cultural imagery of San Tan Ying Yue (Three Pools Mirroring the Moon) in Hangzhou, symbolizing the spirit of the Asian Games. First example (fig.1, a) shows that the overall composition dynamically captures an athlete in action on the surface of a lake, utilizing a color scheme that juxtaposes yellow and purple to create segmented color blocks within the image. Simultaneously, these two colors are applied to the shape of the Three Pools Mirroring the Moon, resulting in a reflective visual effect. On the next example (fig.1, b), the design uses the heterogeneous method of graphical distribution, depicting athletes swimming in the lake and integrating the shape of the Three Pools Mirroring the Moon using bright and lively colors to represent an athletic health. Both works seamlessly blend cultural images with athletic imagery, promoting the aesthetic spirit of the Asian Games while showcasing the distinct form of the Three Pools Mirroring the Moon and the regional culture of Hangzhou.

As illustrated in Figure 2, both poster designs skillfully incorporate the iconic architectural elements of the Asian Games along with the landmark buildings of Hangzhou. On another example (fig. 2, c) the design utilizes the shape of the Asian Games official logo alongside the graphical representation of the broken bridge in West Lake and rowing events, arranged symmetrically in an up-down orientation. Next example (fig. 2, d) shows how the design incorporates the exterior shape of

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the Asian Games venues along with the outline of the broken bridge in West Lake, creating a visually striking mapping effect that emphasizes the vertical relationship. Both designs effectively convey the close association between the Asian Games and Hangzhou while also showcasing the distinct regional culture of the city. Furthermore, the deliberate use of graphic contrast enhances the sense of extension and creates an imaginative space within the composition.

a   b

Fig. 1. Official Hangzhou Asian games poster design [3]:
example *a*; example *b*.

c   d

Fig. 2. Official Hangzhou Asian games poster design [3]:
example *c*; example *d*.

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Cultural heritage holds significant historical, cultural, artistic, and scientific values, making it an indispensable component of urban culture. When it comes to urban visual image design, the incorporation of cultural heritage as a design element serves two important purposes. Firstly, it allows for the integration of cultural heritage into the design, playing a crucial role in safeguarding and transmitting this rich heritage to future generations. Secondly, it enables cities to enhance their regional image and propel urban development. By utilizing cultural heritage in visual design, cities can establish a deeper connection with their unique identity, fostering a sense of pride and belonging among residents and attracting visitors who are intrigued by the city's distinct cultural character. This, in turn, contributes to the overall growth and prosperity of the urban environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that incorporating cultural heritage as a source of inspiration for design elements in urban visual image design has multiple benefits. Firstly, it allows for the integration of cultural heritage into the design, ensuring its preservation and inheritance. Secondly, it aids in the promotion of a city's regional image and drives its overall development. The utilization of cultural heritage models as visual design images, as well as design techniques like graphic homogeneity and symmetrical composition in spatial layout, enhances the spatial imagination of cultural aspects within visual works. By incorporating cultural heritage into the design of major urban events, the promotion of urban cultural heritage is achieved, simultaneously increasing the city's recognizability.

Future research efforts should be directed towards establishing a comprehensive urban visual design system that establishes cultural connections between cultural heritage and urban tourism, economy, and geopolitics. Through urban image design, the cultural heritage of a city can be effectively integrated with its development, fostering a dual-directional approach that supports both modern urban development and cultural inheritance.

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