

Harbin's Russian Emigrant Commercial Art Research - A Case Study of the Modern Hotel Restaurant

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Abstract:

Harbin, historically known as one of the important settlements for Russian emigrants in Northeast China, possesses a rich heritage of Russian emigrant commercial culture. The Modern Hotel Restaurant, as one of the prominent early Russian emigrant enterprises in Harbin, reflects the innovation and uniqueness of Russian emigrants in the commercial field through its commercial art. This study conducts an in-depth analysis of the Modern Hotel Restaurant, outlining the historical background and characteristics of Russian emigrant commercial art and highlighting its significant position in Harbin's commercial art scene. The research reveals that the Modern Hotel Restaurant exhibits distinctive Russian-style elements in areas such as signage, architectural and decorative design, and advertising. These commercial art designs not only catered to the high-quality lifestyle demands of the Russian emigrant society at the time but also made important contributions to the commercial development and cultural exchange in Harbin.

Keywords:

Harbin, Russian Emigrant Commercial Art, Modern Hotel Restaurant

1. Introduction

Since the late 19th century and the early 20th century, Harbin has emerged as a primary settlement for Russian immigrants, giving rise to a vast Russian emigrant community. With the formation of this community, Harbin witnessed the emergence of numerous businesses operated by Russian emigrants, including restaurants, hotels, and cafes. These commercial establishments not only offered unique Russian-flavored cuisine and services but also infused Russian emigrant culture and traditions into their operations, creating a distinct form of commercial art with Russian emigrant characteristics. This paper conducts an in-depth study of the development background and features of Harbin's Russian emigrant commercial art, exploring its crucial significance in cultural heritage, cross-cultural exchange, and local economy, and discussing its relevance as a source of inspiration in contemporary commercial art.

2. Historical Background and Development of Harbin's Russian Emigrant Commercial Art

2.1. Historical Background of Harbin's Russian Emigrant Commercial Art

Russian emigrants refer to Russians or individuals with Russian ancestry residing in foreign countries. Due to geopolitical factors and other influences, a significant number of Russians migrated to Northeast China during the early 20th century, particularly to Harbin. At that time, Harbin was an important transportation hub and trade center in Northeast China, providing favorable settlement conditions for Russian immigrants. During the Russian Revolution and Civil War, even more Russians chose to migrate to Harbin, leading to the rapid growth of the Russian emigrant community.

The formation and development of the Russian emigrant community provided a rich cultural foundation for Harbin's commercial art. These emigrants, upon settling in Harbin, not only retained their Russian cultural traditions but also integrated local characteristics, resulting in a unique lifestyle and business model predominantly influenced by Russian culture. It is within this context that Russian emigrant commercial art gradually emerged.

2.2. Development of Harbin's Russian Emigrant Commercial Art

Harbin became the largest gathering place for Russian emigrants in China, forming a vast community with distinctive Russian emigrant cultural phenomena. These emigrants continued to inherit and promote their artistic traditions, becoming a significant driving force behind the development of Harbin's Russian emigrant commercial art. Over time, Harbin prospered as a city, witnessing a continuous increase in commercial activities. As a result, Harbin's Russian emigrant commercial art began to take shape, with a growing number of businesses such as shops, companies, and factories providing more application scenarios for commercial art. Business owners started to emphasize the design of product packaging, advertising, and storefront signs [1].

In the early 20th century, media and printing technology rapidly advanced, leading to more diverse and easily disseminated advertising and posters. Commercial artists could better utilize these technological means to reach a broader audience with their design works. Russian emigrants in Harbin also began establishing art education institutions to cultivate professional artistic talents.

Consequently, the development of Harbin's Russian emigrant commercial art in the early 20th century exhibited a predominant Russian-style influence, and its application in various commercial fields expanded, making it an indispensable and integral part of commercial activities.

3. Expression of Harbin's Russian Emigrant Commercial Art in the Modern Hotel Restaurant

The history and development of the Modern Hotel Restaurant represent a significant part of Harbin's Russian emigrant commercial art and hold essential historical and cultural value. It not only showcases the entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen of Russian emigrant businessmen but also witnesses the evolution of commercial art in the Harbin region. For scholars and enthusiasts researching Harbin's Russian emigrant commercial art, the Modern Hotel Restaurant is an indispensable and critical subject

of study.

3.1. Logo Design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant

Examining the historical evolution of the logo design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant, through the investigation and comparison of different logo designs from various historical periods, one can understand the changes and evolution of logo design over time. This includes the initial logo design of the restaurant at its founding, subsequent revisions and updates, as well as shifts in artistic styles and adjustments to business strategies.

The logo design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant underwent several transformations, each signifying a renewal and adjustment of the brand image. In the beginning, in 1927, the initial logo design featured the abbreviation “MR”, designed by the architect of the Modern Hotel Restaurant, Butler Robertson (Figure 1). The logo used a hyphen between the letters, displaying a nostalgic feel. By 1950, the logo design dropped the "MR" entirely, and the new logo featured a single letter “M”.



Figure 1. English logo of Modern Hotel Restaurant.

using a streamline design language. In 1963, the restaurant adopted a typical design style of the 1960s, with leaf-shaped elements becoming the new logo design. In 1972, the Modern Hotel Restaurant once again changed its logo design, adopting a more artistic design language. The "M" in the logo took on a geometric form, resembling a cube. In 1980, the logo design was simplified once more, omitting the "M" letter and retaining a simple rectangular shape, colored in red. In 2016, the restaurant underwent a brand image update, and the logo was redesigned again, this time incorporating modern logo design elements. The new logo featured a combination of deep red and gold colors, taking on a modern rectangular shape. Overall, the logo design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant underwent multiple updates, reflecting different design styles and popular trends of various eras.

The aesthetic essence conveyed by the logo design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant lies firstly in its design style. The restaurant adopts the French Baroque style, which combines the luxurious sense of traditional European aristocracy with magnificent artistic expression, showcasing an elegant and highly aesthetic pursuit. Secondly, the color palette uses a combination of dark and bright tones, incorporating typical high-end colors such as gold, silver, and black. These colors elevate the brand's sense of luxury, professionalism, and credibility, creating an atmosphere that is both opulent and substantial [2].

3.2. Architecture and Decorative Design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant

The architecture and decorative design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant vividly showcase characteristics of romanticism and modern art style. Firstly, in terms of

architectural style, the Modern Hotel represents one of the masterpieces of Art Nouveau and combines European Renaissance architectural decorative techniques with modern style elements [3]. The most notable feature is the rejection of straight lines and angles, using flowing lines to depict natural beauty. The large eaves, extended balconies, and unique diamond-shaped domes highlight the artistic charm of the building facade. Secondly, the interior decoration adopts some imitation of Neoclassical decorative techniques, such as plaster patterns, brick walls, colonial-style floor tiles, and wooden furniture, as well as luxurious wall decorations and copper tapestries, exuding an opulent and elegant atmosphere, often referred to as the "Oriental Palace of Versailles" (Figure 2). Additionally, the restaurant incorporates various art decorations, such as murals, on its walls and throughout the space, leaving a deep impression on visitors [4].

The decorative elements and artistic features of the Modern Hotel Restaurant are mainly characterized by:

Natural Elements: The restaurant often incorporates natural elements such as plants, flowers, and natural materials, creating a serene and relaxing ambiance for diners (Fig. 3).



Figure 2. *Decorative elements of Modern Hotel Restaurant.*



Figure 3. *The Decorative Elements of Modern Hotel Restaurant.*

Unique Lighting Design: The restaurant places emphasis on lighting design, utilizing special light fixtures and lighting effects to create a warm dining atmosphere. The changing lights and shadows projected on the walls create a romantic and comfortable dining experience.

Art Display: The restaurant usually showcases select works of art, such as paintings, photography, or sculptures, adding cultural appeal and providing additional visual enjoyment for diners.

Carefully Designed Furniture and Décor: The Modern Hotel Restaurant typically employs high-quality furniture and decorative items to offer a comfortable dining

environment. Delicate design details, such as tablecloths, tableware, and decorations, aim to create a unique dining experience.

Local Cultural Characteristics: The restaurant may also incorporate local cultural elements and art crafts, showcasing local customs and people's preferences.

Regarding color palette, the restaurant primarily employs shades of blue, white, and gray, creating a fresh and elegant overall space. To ensure customers' enjoyment during their dining experience, the spatial design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant carefully distinguishes areas for dining, conversation, and relaxation while also ensuring privacy and comfort for diners[5]. The architecture and decorative design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant exhibit a strong modern art style, focusing on providing customers with an artistic dining experience. The decorative elements and artistic features, including wall decorations, ceiling designs, furniture arrangements, lighting fixtures, etc., are studied to reveal the unique and artistically innovative aspects of the Modern Hotel Restaurant's decorative design.

3.3. Advertising Design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant

From the perspective of the overall brand image, the advertising design of the Modern Hotel Restaurant also embodies a strong modern art and romanticism ambiance (Figure 4). In the advertising design, the Modern Hotel Restaurant first employs noble and elegant colors and fonts.



Figure 4. Advertising Design of Modern Hotel Restaurant.

such as black, gold, and white to highlight the restaurant's sophistication, elegance, and comfort. Secondly, the advertising design emphasizes visual impact. The restaurant's advertisements revolve around the theme of fine cuisine, presenting customers with various delectable images and dishes using high-definition images and innovative design elements to make the advertisements visually captivating and appealing to potential consumers. Lastly, in terms of advertising dissemination channels, the Modern Hotel Restaurant adopts various forms of promotion, advertising in newspapers, magazines, and other media, using elegant and sophisticated colors, food themes, and innovative visual elements in the advertising design to attract more consumers.

The advertising design strategy of the Modern Hotel Restaurant mainly includes the following points:

Emphasizing Brand Image: The Modern Hotel Restaurant emphasizes its brand image by using elegant and solemn colors and fonts in the design, highlighting its elegant and comfortable characteristics, thus capturing the attention of potential customers (Figure 5).



Figure 5. *Exquisite Colorful Advertisements Printed by Modern Hotel Restaurant.*

Highlighting the Culinary Theme: Cuisine is a significant feature of the Modern Hotel Restaurant. In the advertising strategy, the restaurant revolves around the culinary theme, utilizing precisely selected images and texts, innovative design elements, and high-definition images to make the advertisements more eye-catching and appealing to potential consumers.

A comprehensive study of the visual presentation of Modern Hotel Restaurant advertisements includes elements such as logos, advertisements, posters, brochures, and travel stickers. By analyzing the colors, images, layout, and other design elements used, as well as their visual impact on brand image and target audience.

The visual presentation of the Modern Hotel Restaurant's advertisements is designed based on its brand positioning and target audience. It may include:

Image Showcase: The advertisements can use exquisite photos to showcase the restaurant's dining environment, culinary specialties, or service scenes to attract viewers' attention.

Text-based Ads: Descriptive text can be used to showcase the restaurant's features and ambiance, such as the prices of delicious dishes and the quality of service, creating a sense of immersion for viewers.

Illustrations/Hand-drawn Art: The restaurant's unique style and characteristics can be displayed through illustrations or hand-drawn art.

Culinary Collages: Cleverly combining the restaurant's signature dishes or various culinary elements to create an enticing image that arouses viewers' appetite and curiosity.

Real-Life Displays: Utilizing photography techniques to showcase the restaurant's interior layout, decorative details, dining scenes, etc., allowing viewers to more intuitively experience the dining experience and ambiance.

Through these diverse advertising design strategies, the Modern Hotel Restaurant effectively conveys its brand image, culinary specialties, and unique ambiance, attracting customers and leaving a lasting impression.

4. The Impact of Modern Hotel Restaurant on the Business Development in Harbin Region

As an early well-known Russian diaspora enterprise in the Harbin region, the Modern Hotel Restaurant has had a profound impact on the local business development. It has promoted business diversification by introducing Russian-style dining and service concepts, bringing new elements and experiences to the local business scene. The restaurant's unique decor, advertising design, and service concept have attracted a large number of customers, contributing to the prosperity of related industries such as the hotel industry, transportation, and travel agencies. As one of Harbin's cultural symbols, the Modern Hotel Restaurant has had far-reaching and multifaceted effects on the local business development. The following describes in detail the impact of the Modern Hotel Restaurant on several important aspects of business development in the Harbin region:

4.1. Cultural Heritage and Preservation

As one of the representatives of Russian diaspora business art in Harbin, the Modern Hotel Restaurant plays an important role in cultural heritage. It embodies Russian diaspora culture, carrying the essence and traditions of Russian culture. Through its architectural style, decorative art, dishes, and service methods, it showcases the unique charm of Russian culture. While incorporating Russian elements, the Modern Hotel Restaurant also emphasizes the local characteristics of the Harbin region. It ingeniously combines Russian and Chinese cultures, integrating the region's history and local customs into the restaurant's decoration, menu, and services, creating a unique local flavor and making contributions to the preservation and protection of Harbin's urban history and culture.

4.2. Cultural and Tourist Promotion

With its unique architectural style and exquisite commercial art design, the Modern Hotel Restaurant has contributed to shaping the city's image. Its presence has enriched the image of the Harbin region, creating a unique cultural brand for the city. As a Russian diaspora business institution, the Modern Hotel Restaurant has become an important window for local Russian-Chinese cultural exchange. Through cultural displays and performances, it promotes cultural exchange and integration between Russia and China, enriches the cultural life of local residents, and enhances the tourism experience for visitors. The Modern Hotel Restaurant provides tourists with a rich experience through its unique cultural atmosphere and exquisite decoration. Visitors can taste authentic Russian cuisine, experience unique Russian-style service and cultural ambiance, enriching their travel experience and enhancing Harbin's attractiveness as a tourist destination.

4.3. Brand Image and Regional Recognition

As a well-known brand in the Harbin region, the Modern Hotel Restaurant has positively influenced the local brand image and regional recognition. Since its establishment, the restaurant has become one of Harbin's important business cards with its unique history and cultural heritage, contributing to the city's recognition and image both domestically and internationally. Many tourists visiting Harbin take the time to visit the Modern Hotel Restaurant to enjoy its delicious cuisine, further increasing the restaurant's popularity and contributing to the city's economic

development.

In conclusion, the Modern Hotel Restaurant has had a multifaceted positive impact on the business development in the Harbin region. It serves as a typical case of Russian diaspora cultural heritage, promotes the inheritance and promotion of local culture and tourism, and becomes an important venue for business interaction and exchange, driving continuous progress in the local business development. This historical restaurant adds a unique charm to the region's business ecosystem and cultural ambiance.

5. Conclusions

As a business institution with a Russian diaspora background, the Modern Hotel Restaurant has not only provided unique dining and services to Harbin but also made positive contributions to its development. The diverse forms of commercial art expression at the Modern Hotel Restaurant, including logo design, architectural design and decorative art, and advertising design, have played significant roles in shaping the restaurant's image, enhancing customer experience, and promoting Russian diaspora culture.

The Modern Hotel Restaurant carries the essence and traditions of Russian diaspora culture, creating a unique cultural atmosphere. This cultural inheritance and local characteristics are of great significance in promoting cultural diversity, cross-cultural exchange, and the prosperity of the local economy. The successful experience and commercial art characteristics of the Modern Hotel Restaurant offer insights and reference value for contemporary commercial art. It demonstrates how to inject cultural connotations into commercial art, enhance the value and influence of commercial brands through cultural heritage, and integrate local characteristics to provide a unique service experience.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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