

# Application Strategy of Paper-cut Art in Packaging Design

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## Abstract:

The art of Chinese paper-cutting boasts a profound historical background and holds the status of intangible cultural heritage, deeply ingrained in the social fabric of diverse ethnic groups. It possesses abundant artistic value and exerts an indispensable influence on contemporary design practices. In this era characterized by rapid economic development, packaging design has garnered increasing attention. Integrating folk paper-cutting art into packaging design not only enhances the cultural worth of products but also stimulates users' interest in this traditional art form, thereby facilitating its inheritance and promotion.

## Keywords:

Paper-Cut Art, Package Design, Application Strategy

## 1. Introduction

The Chinese paper-cutting tradition represents a vibrant civilization, with its living culture as its fundamental characteristic. China holds the distinction of being the birthplace of paper-cutting, which is an intangible cultural heritage type that showcases remarkable universality and cultural diversity.[1] In traditional Chinese culture, paper-cut art holds significant appreciation value and carries profound historical and cultural connotations. Due to its distinctive style and exquisite craftsmanship, it has garnered international attention and widespread recognition. In contemporary society, paper-cut works have become a common element in festival decorations or home adornments. With the advancement of time and progress in science and technology, paper cutting has also started integrating modern design concepts and the application of new materials while constantly innovating. By analyzing the characteristics of paper-cut art and combining its practical value in packaging design, this study explores the inspiration and application strategies derived from paper-cut art for the future development direction of packaging design. Through examining the cultural significance of paper-cut art as well as its techniques, patterns, colors, this research summarizes how it can be integrated with packaging design while providing an analysis on its guidance for future developments.

## 2. The Inheritance and Development of Chinese Paper Cutting

Paper cutting is a traditional Chinese folk art form that has been passed down for at least 1,500 years. It originated from primitive forms of plastic arts, such as rock paintings and painted pottery patterns. The generalized, exaggerated, and symbolic expressions in these art forms laid the artistic foundation for the composition and modeling techniques used in Chinese paper-cutting art. During the Spring and Autumn Period, advancements in labor tools led to the use of scissors and carving knives, gradually transforming paper cutting into a distinct art form characterized by intricate cut-outs like decal, win, and transparent carving [2]. In the Eastern Han Dynasty, one of China's four great inventions - paper - emerged. The introduction of paper making made paper cutting more accessible and convenient, thereby promoting its development and popularization.

The art of paper cutting exhibits three primary characteristics. Firstly, it employs lines as its fundamental element, skillfully removing unwanted sections through intricate cutting or carving techniques to achieve the desired morphological presentation. Secondly, paper-cutting art encompasses a broad spectrum of subjects, ranging from mythological narratives and opera personas to auspicious symbols and depictions of everyday life, thereby reflecting the profound imagination and pursuit of an enhanced existence by individuals. Lastly, this form of artistic expression possesses a remarkable decorative quality; its color schemes and techniques are remarkably versatile and diverse, allowing for seamless integration with other crafts to produce an array of practical yet aesthetically pleasing products.

Folk paper-cut art is a representative example of Chinese folk handicraft, combining elements of traditional visual and manual arts. Throughout its development, it has acquired compatible, romantic, and diversified artistic characteristics that have played a significant role in promoting the inheritance and development of folk culture across different regions [3]. As time progresses, traditional paper-cutting styles and patterns have undergone certain changes, giving rise to unique forms of paper-cut art in various parts of China. This art form has become an important aesthetic element within China's cultural industry. The expression of paper cutting in different regional cultures now extends beyond simple scissor cutting; it involves creating silhouette art through hollowing out techniques after the initial cut. By combining the distinctive cultural attributes of each region with the visual impact of paper cutting, exceptional designs continue to emerge while encompassing aesthetic value, cultural value, and emotional value inherent in this art form. Folk crafts have injected more elements from everyday life into the practice of paper cutting which finds extensive use in practical applications. It establishes profound connections with people and even contributes to the development of social culture and economy. These factors are crucial for ensuring continuous inheritance and development as China's intangible cultural heritage [3]. In recent years, state support for folk paper-cut art across many regions has extended to related industries as well. This support provides a conducive environment for preserving and developing this unique artistic tradition.

## 3. The Application Value of Paper-cut Art in Packaging Design

Packaging design involves the use of symbols, pictures, text, and other artistic techniques to effectively convey information about packaged goods and visually express ideas. It is important for packaging design inspiration to not only convey relevant internal item information but also reflect local culture, characteristics, and

aesthetic concepts while pursuing practicality. Although we encounter various packaging products in our daily lives, few are able to reflect a national style or meet people's aesthetic needs. In this regard, packaging designers should recognize that excellent traditional culture is vital for a nation and should be reasonably utilized and developed. Blindly applying design models from developed countries cannot create product packaging that satisfies people's aesthetics and needs.[4] Folk paper-cut art has a long history with distinct Chinese characteristics. By integrating it into packaging design through innovative upgrades in shape, color, and composition, not only can brand characteristics be reflected and cultural heritage highlighted but it can also better cater to modern aesthetic concepts. This will lead to improved economic benefits and social impact. Incorporating paper-cut art elements into the field of packaging design in the future is both feasible and of great practical significance. It is crucial to explore the characteristics of paper-cut art, integrate them into packaging design effectively, and better showcase the combination of traditional aesthetics with modern aesthetics for the future development of this field. To conclude, with the advancement of society, the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage among individuals has become increasingly extensive, providing more opportunities for acquiring knowledge about intangible cultural heritage compared to the past. The concept of "edutainment" can be effectively realized through immersive and user-friendly gaming platforms. These instances exemplify the potential and viability of games in facilitating the digital transmission of traditional culture.

Chinese paper-cut art plays a significant role in the development of The Times and the evolution of traditional art. Whether it is graphic symbols, text language, or color language, it brings ample opportunities for enhancing and upgrading packaging design. [5] To better elucidate the application strategy of paper-cut art in packaging design, we need to conduct an in-depth exploration of its implementation and summarize design experience. Firstly, regarding the application of graphic language: each paper-cut work embodies the spirit and concept through specific ideographic symbols that gradually acquire fixed meanings. Integrating this graphic language into packaging design can evoke associations and stimulate deep psychological perceptions to effectively convey product information. It is crucial for designers to grasp both the product's characteristics and the graphics during the application process, finding a meeting point between them to achieve comprehensive integration from visual form to emotional thought. Secondly, concerning written language: employing paper-cut text enhances overall aesthetics in packaging presentation while captivating consumers' interest in products. Particularly for brand packaging designs involving basic information introduction, trademarks, descriptions etc., designers should skillfully utilize paper-cut text to accurately express core packaging information. Lastly, with regards to color language: consumers' initial impression of a product stems from its colors; therefore, achieving seamless integration between paper-cut art and packaging design necessitates meticulous efforts in color coordination along with continuous optimization and adjustment. By leveraging deeper traditional culture expressions embodying people's good wishes and expectations through more appealing external visuals.

## **4. The Application Strategy of Paper-cut Art in Packaging Design**

### ***4.1. The cultural connotation of paper-cut art***

In the course of its long-standing development, paper-cut art has demonstrated a rich cultural connotation through its artistic imagery, which profoundly reflects people's pursuit of spiritual elevation. By incorporating such cultural significance into packaging design and expanding its meaning, the work can acquire a cultural theme and exhibit a distinctive cultural taste. Paper cutting art encompasses numerous auspicious patterns like dragons, phoenixes, fish, and birds that effectively contribute to promoting the cultural implications of packaging products. However, during the actual application process, packaging designers must be mindful of regional cultural differences. If paper-cut art involves religious beliefs, legends, historical events or folklore content that contrasts with the intended culture conveyed by packaging products for sale purposes; it should not be utilized. For instance, "pine crane" symbolizes health and longevity in China but is considered unlucky in France; hence we must respect both design themes and cultures to better convey the cultural connotations within packaging design. [5]

China boasts vast territory and abundant resources. Different regions exhibit distinct folk cultural characteristics influenced by their natural ecology and cultural ecology. These differences are typically manifested in the patterns and styles of paper-cutting. In northern China, paper cutting is characterized by lively themes, simplistic yet exaggerated shapes, intricate graphics, and a preference for large areas of expression. On the other hand, southern paper cutting is delicate, elegant, graceful, with an emphasis on smooth lines. Both styles possess unique cultural connotations that are highly distinctive. By incorporating these elements into packaging design with artistic variation while considering seamless integration, not only can the meaning be effectively conveyed and aesthetic value highlighted to captivate the public's attention but also regional cultural significance can be emphasized to emotionally resonate with the audience and foster a sense of belonging and identity.

#### ***4.2. Paper cutting art material provided***

The subjects of Chinese folk paper-cutting are diverse, primarily represented by opera narratives, auspicious concepts, and folk traditions. It serves as a reflection of social life, encompassing not only various aspects of people's work and daily lives but also the emotional experiences and life pursuits of individuals from different ethnic groups through its unique artistic language. Each pattern, image, and composition in national paper-cutting does not exist in isolation; rather, it resembles a leaf boat sailing along the long river of history and culture. Moreover, it may carry and accumulate an array of cultural information and symbols imbued with primitive mysterious hues that have yet to be scientifically recognized [6]. Paper-cut art encompasses numerous modeling elements and a rich narrative background which provide abundant materials and fundamental resources with cultural significance for packaging design creation. Auspicious patterns in paper-cutting contain profound cultural connotations such as blessings, prayers, good fortune, wealth etc., symbolizing people's aspirations for a better life. For instance, "Fu Lu Shouxi" patterns are often depicted through images like bats (fu), deer (Lu), longevity peaches (Shou), while "auspicious Ruyi" patterns combine divine creatures such as dragons, phoenixes, and qilins with auspicious motifs like lotus flowers, fish, gourds etc., conveying positive meanings to express people's desires for an improved existence [7]. A variety of animals, plants, characters, and scenes from everyday life employed in paper-cut art can enhance the meaning and depth of packaging appearances, resulting in packaging designs that exude an elegant simplicity.

### ***4.3. The decoration of paper-cut art is varied***

As a traditional folk art form, paper-cutting is widely utilized in design due to its highly decorative nature. On one hand, it possesses exquisite characteristics and is often affixed onto windows, lintels, or beams as ornamental “window flowers.” On the other hand, it conveys profound meanings such as good fortune, fertility, and prosperity. Furthermore, the hollowed-out features of paper-cutting add significant aesthetic value to this art form. In order to adapt to window placement, folk paper-cutting crafts various forms of window flowers that are both lively and flexible. [8] Red has always been acknowledged as the most original, vibrant, and visually impactful color. [5] Simultaneously, red is also a prevalent hue in the art of paper cutting, symbolizing happiness, auspiciousness, and joy. When incorporated into packaging design, the integration of red can enhance clarity and further accentuate its festive characteristics. For instance, the iconic circular paper-cut pattern seamlessly combines characters with decorative motifs and animals to form a ring through specific splitting techniques, reorganization, and transformation methods. This expresses designers’ aspirations for a beautiful life while reinforcing auspicious blessings and effectively elevating the cultural value of packaging.

The modern packaging industry offers a wide range of shapes, including square, rectangular, trapezoidal, and window-shaped designs. These diverse shapes are tailored to meet the specific needs of different products. Pattern design plays a crucial role in packaging design as it should be aligned with the product’s form. The composition of paper-cut patterns is crafted using manufacturing techniques to achieve the desired shape. Moreover, pattern designs should be suitable for paper-cut shapes that can be easily applied in various environments while maintaining flexibility and vibrancy.

In the performance of paper-cut art decoration, it is essential to establish a connection with the folk appreciation habits and living customs reflected in it, as well as incorporate content from the local culture that resonates with the local people, thereby creating a distinct regional characteristic for paper-cut art. Given China’s vast territory, variations in paper-cut styles and modes of expression are closely tied to the aesthetic preferences and expressive skills of local individuals, along with the unique color palette employed in paper-cutting. In essence, this art form serves as a specific manifestation of regional culture. For thousands of years, exquisite paper-cuts have brought joy and radiance into people's lives. As an integral part of various traditional festivals and daily activities, paper-cutting assumes a role that cannot be substituted by any other artistic medium.

The art of paper-cutting offers a versatile and unrestricted approach to decoration, allowing for various expressions and forms. This results in a more dynamic subject matter. By utilizing flexible elements in design objects, such as constructing or flattening them to create three-dimensional effects, the packaging design experience is greatly enhanced. In particular, incorporating the folk characteristics of paper cutting into the design of local tourism souvenirs and food products requires an abundance of materials as a foundation. This enriches the emotional concept of packaging and effectively conveys accurate humanistic situations.

## **5. Conclusions**

Paper-cutting, as one of the traditional Chinese handicraft skills, boasts a rich history and unique allure, and continues to thrive in contemporary society. Folk

paper-cut packaging design not only serves a functional purpose but also encompasses various social and cultural functions. As an independent element, it plays an increasingly pivotal role in packaging design. This entails more than simply adorning packages with paper-cut patterns or incorporating hollow-out paper-cuts; it necessitates a profound understanding and exploration of Chinese folk paper-cut art. Simultaneously, creative utilization of paper-cut art within packaging design allows for the fusion of artistic techniques and expressive forms that reflect people's perspectives, thoughts, and emotions while meeting future aesthetic requirements. Furthermore, this aligns with economic development and the demand for enhanced consumption levels by enabling individuals to appreciate the beauty of traditional art. Consequently, this not only facilitates product promotion and sales improvement but also enriches the cultural significance of products while enhancing their value, thus propelling the advancement of folk paper-cut art.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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