

Inquiry into Innovative Expression Strategies for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Brand Visual Design

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Abstract:

Driven by the dual forces of globalization and national digitalization strategies, intangible cultural heritage has gradually become a core asset for building differentiated competitive advantages in branding. Currently, the application of intangible cultural heritage elements in brand visual design tends to be superficial and homogenized, lacking vitality due to static presentation. This paper adopts a multidisciplinary perspective and uses typical cases such as Pequeno, Honor of Kings × Dunhuang Academy as empirical evidence to deeply explore existing issues. The aim is to construct a systematic design strategy that balances cultural authenticity, modern aesthetics, and business logic, providing a feasible theoretical reference and practical path for the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture.

Keywords:

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Brand Visual Identity System, Cultural Inheritance, Digital Design

1. Introduction

In recent years, the country has successively issued the “Opinions on Implementing the Project of Inheriting and Developing Chinese Excellent Traditional Culture” and the “Cultural Development Plan for the 14th Five-Year Plan”, explicitly proposing to promote the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is not only a witness to history, but also a living gene. Traditional museum-style static protection has been unable to meet its inheritance needs. By injecting intangible cultural heritage elements into the brand visual system, not only can it endow the brand with profound cultural heritage, but also allow intangible cultural heritage to regain vitality in consumption scenarios, achieving a win-win situation of cultural value and economic value.

2. Research Background and Current Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage In Brand Visual Design

Under the dual backdrop of the national cultural digitization strategy and global cultural confidence, intangible cultural heritage has evolved from being merely a protected object to becoming a core competency for brand building. In contemporary

design practices, the application of intangible cultural heritage often falls into superficiality and homogenization. Many brands simply transplant traditional patterns, resulting in cultural inheritance becoming a mere formality, unable to evoke deep emotions in consumers, and thus limiting the brand's premium pricing ability. This phenomenon of supply and demand mismatch underscores the urgency of establishing a systematic transformation mechanism.

(1). The current application of intangible cultural heritage in brand visual design mainly manifests as an over-reliance on superficial symbols. Designers often overlook the historical context and craftsmanship logic behind intangible cultural heritage, reducing profound totems to mere decorative patches.

(2). Constrained by traditional media thinking, most designs for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) brands remain confined to static displays on two-dimensional planes. The dynamic processes inherent in ICH, such as the firing of ceramics, the stitching techniques of embroidery, and the unique texture of materials, are difficult to fully exhibit in static packaging. This one-dimensional visual output lacks interactivity and immersion, and cannot adapt to the users' demand for multi-sensory experiences in the digital media era. Consequently, ICH appears dull and lacks vitality in brand communication, and cannot be effectively disseminated.

(3). The mechanical reproduction of visual elements lacks innovation. Designers, lacking an understanding of the patterns inherent in intangible cultural heritage, merely utilize computer software to perform simple vector replication and collage of traditional motifs such as phoenixes, ruyis, and cloud patterns. This approach disregards the original cultural context in which these elements originated, resulting in a chaotic and disorganized composition. Instead of enhancing the cultural ambiance, it undermines the overall aesthetic and simplicity of the brand's visual identity. Many brands, in an attempt to cater to the market, recklessly alter the cultural connotations of intangible cultural heritage. For instance, they use solemn patterns traditionally used for rituals on children's snack packaging, or apply colors symbolizing mourning to festive gifts.

3. Innovation and Value of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Brand Visual Design

(1). Incorporating intangible cultural heritage into brand design enhances the brand's recognition. Traditional intangible cultural heritage elements, when directly applied, are complex and do not align with contemporary aesthetics, making them difficult to transform. The key to innovation lies in refining and reconstructing traditional patterns, retaining cultural meanings while conforming to the simplicity logic of modern design. For example, Pequenino abandoned the traditional bright reds and greens commonly used in domestic products, instead drawing inspiration from the elegant sky-blue hue of Song porcelain and simplifying the meticulous lines. This approach not only endows the brand with a unique oriental charm but also effectively avoids homogenization competition, transforming cultural heritage into tangible brand assets.

(2). Leveraging the dissemination capabilities of digital media, we can extend the social value of intangible cultural heritage. Brand design should not be limited to static packaging beautification. Instead, by incorporating dynamic graphics, interactive experiences, and other technological means, brands can transform static images originally stored in museums into accessible and participatory visual designs.

For example, Honor of Kings collaborated with the Dunhuang Academy to transform the static beauty of murals into dynamic special effects in the game, allowing young users to perceive the charm of traditional art through interaction. This innovation not only enhances users' understanding of intangible cultural heritage but also expands its dissemination effect, achieving a win-win situation for both brand commercial value and the dissemination of intangible cultural heritage. [1]

(3). Strengthen the cognitive connection between the brand and consumers. Consumers' identification with a brand is essentially their recognition of the brand's philosophy and culture. Intangible cultural heritage originates from the practices of everyday life and has undergone long-term inheritance, forming a broad foundation of group cognition and cultural resonance. Integrating it into brand visual design can quickly bridge the psychological gap between the brand and consumers. For example, traditional festivals contain rich visual symbols (such as auspicious patterns for the Spring Festival and the shape of Loong Boats for the Loong Boat Festival), which can quickly evoke consumers' familiarity and sense of cultural belonging; the color combinations in traditional embroidery and pottery conform to the long-established aesthetic habits of the public, easily gaining consumers' aesthetic recognition. This cognitive connection based on cultural resonance is more compelling than mere commercial promotion, enabling consumers to form a more stable emotional identification and cognitive loyalty to the brand. [2]

4. Analysis of Innovative Expression Strategies for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Brand Visual Design

In order to break through the limitations of singular design studies, we incorporate the perspective of interdisciplinary studies into brand design. Through interdisciplinary analysis, we clarify the cultural hierarchy of intangible cultural heritage resources, from material forms to craftsmanship techniques, and then to spiritual cores, establishing a new value coordinate for them in the contemporary brand context. This lays a solid theoretical foundation for the formulation of subsequent strategies.

(1). The integration of intangible cultural heritage into brand design can mitigate the homogenization dilemma of brand design to a certain extent. It is essential to deeply understand the culture rather than simply transporting symbols. Brands should not simply use traditional patterns, but should explore cultural stories and craftsmanship techniques to establish the differentiation between each intangible cultural heritage. For example, Huaxi Zi did not stop at generic traditional auspicious patterns, but instead deeply understood the embossed aesthetics and craftsman philosophy in the forging techniques of Miao silver jewelry, transforming it into a unique visual language of oriental carving. This precise approach from the spiritual level successfully builds a high degree of brand recognition, avoids visual similarity with similar domestic products, and realizes the transformation of cultural value into brand assets.

(2). The combination of traditional craftsmanship and modern materials makes it more suitable for digitalization and youth appeal. The key to enhancing the texture of modern brand design lies in extending the visual aesthetic of intangible cultural heritage to the tactile experience, achieving mainstream market penetration and increasing consumer preference through material texture innovation. Guanxia cleverly employs this strategy in its aromatherapy packaging design, simulating the warmth of

Xuan paper with the rough texture of special paper and restoring the cracking texture of ceramics through embossing technology. This collaboration between material and visual elements allows consumers to perceive the brand's oriental charm through their fingertips before even opening the package, greatly enriching the sensory dimension of intangible cultural heritage in modern design. In the era of digital survival, brands must utilize dynamic visual technology to break the stereotype of static and rigid intangible cultural heritage, activating cultural identity among young people through interactive experiences. The collaboration between Honor of Kings and the Dunhuang Academy is a prime example. Instead of directly replicating murals, the design team geometrically reconstructed the flying ribbons and simulated the physical dynamics of silk using a game engine. This approach, which integrates intangible cultural heritage elements into skill effects and interactive interfaces, revitalizes millennia-old art in a digital context and effectively expands the dissemination radius of traditional culture.

(3). Incorporating visual branding into intangible cultural heritage enhances narrative depth and emotional connection. For a brand to establish a profound emotional connection with intangible cultural heritage on a visual level, it must employ narrative design to bridge the gap between historical time and present. This necessitates designers to transform the historical anecdotes or craftsmanship processes behind intangible cultural heritage into continuous visual narrative threads, endowing them with new identities through illustrations or videos. In its collaborative design with the Dunhuang Museum, Heytea adopted a humorous narrative approach, juxtaposing the scene of ancient people consuming soup with the posture of modern youths sipping milk tea, creating a sense of humor that transcends time and space. This visual narrative strategy successfully dispels the seriousness of intangible cultural heritage, sparking social buzz while bridging the psychological gap between young consumers and intangible cultural heritage.

(4). Inviting Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritor to Participate in Brand Visual Design Brands can invite intangible cultural heritage inheritors to participate in the entire process of brand visual design, leveraging the inheritors' professional knowledge and skills to enhance the cultural connotation of the brand's visual design. The inheritors can provide core information such as craft implementation details, cultural implications of elements, and traditional cultural taboos to provide decision-making basis for designers and avoid cultural deviations in the design. For example, a Paper Cuttings inheritor can demonstrate on-site the impact of different paper materials and cutting tools on the texture and detail presentation of Paper Cuttings patterns, allowing designers to select suitable paper and tools for product packaging accordingly. The inheritor can also provide professional advice on the density layout of Paper Cuttings elements, and designers can adjust the pattern structure accordingly to ensure that the design effect retains the core essence of the Paper Cuttings craft while meeting the overall requirements of the brand's visual design. [3]

(5). Shifting Mindsets and Actively Promoting Diverse Integration The application and preservation of intangible cultural heritage in visual design is not a fixed pattern, but rather one that should continuously evolve and innovate through protection and inheritance. Therefore, in the process of application, designers must promptly shift their mindsets, effectively integrating traditional and modern elements, as well as traditional craftsmanship and modern technology, to further enhance the quality of visual design and achieve the preservation and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

5. Conclusions

In summary, brand visual design is a primary factor influencing a brand's market competitiveness. In the design process, relying on the organic integration of intangible cultural heritage and brand visual design can enrich the cultural connotation and symbolic materials of brand visual design, while providing sufficient guarantees for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of the living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. To achieve this, it is necessary to base on core value analysis, accurately grasp the core value of intangible cultural heritage, continuously deepen the exploration of the connotation of intangible cultural heritage, and under the guidance of contemporary aesthetic demands, achieve good innovative expression effects through the comprehensive application of multiple practical strategies such as connotation interpretation and symbolic reconstruction.

Conflicts of Interest

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

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