

# Research on the Interpretative Space and Meaningful Structure of "National Trend" Clothing Design

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**Abstract:** In response to the problems of homogenization, lack of innovation, rigid application and self-conformity in the design of "national trend" clothing, the author analyzes the concept and expression of "national trend" clothing based on the theory of "symbolic interpretation space and meaning structure" in the study of visual culture. Based on the analysis of the concept and expression of "national trend" clothing, the author analyzes two typical cases of "China Li Ning" brand and "2022 Winter Olympic Games uniform design", using the theory of "symbolic interpretation space and implication structure" in visual culture research to clarify the study shows that the logic of "national trend" apparel design and the competitiveness of "national trend" apparel brands have been improved. The study shows that "national trend" clothing design presents multi-dimensional and multi-level development characteristics, taking consumers' needs as the proposition, keeping a close eye on the pulse of fashion, breaking through the dichotomy between East and West, and building a new ecology of shared and symbiotic design, in order to keep "national trend" always new and sustainable. The new ecology of shared and symbiotic design will enable the "national trend" to remain new and develop forever.

**Keywords:** "National fashion" clothing design, Interpretative space, Meaningful structure, International dress code

## 1. Introduction

Along with the deepening development of the "national trend" in all areas of social life, the spread of Chinese culture, the promotion of national spirit and the enhancement of national self-confidence have become the main theme of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new era. As a multifaceted amalgamation of fashion, technology, economy, culture and art, the "national trend" is a symbol of the rise of China's local culture. At present, the research on the "national trend" clothing design is mainly focused on the discussion of cultural aspects [1-2], the study of brand design methods [3-5] and case studies in the field of marketing [7,9], but there are few studies on the "national trend" clothing design from the perspective of visual culture. The article discusses the design of clothing from the perspective of visual culture. The article starts from the perspective of semiotics and contemporary visual culture research [6,8], based on the knowledge system of THE DRESS CODE [12], and reinterprets the classic cases of "national trend" fashion design with the logical analysis method of "symbolic interpretation space and meaning structure". The paper is based on the knowledge system of THE DRESS CODE [12], and reinterprets the classic cases of "national fashion" with the help of the logical analysis of "symbolic interpretation space and implication structure".

## 2. The concept and expression of "national trend" clothing

The term "Guochao" is an addition of "guo" and "tide", with "guo" representing China, meaning the revival of Chinese culture. The word "tide" represents the trend, meaning the fashion of the times [1]. "The combination of the two into one defines the new context of the current rise of Chinese culture in terms of space and time.

### 2.1. The concept of "national trend" clothing

In order to clarify the meaning of "guochao" clothing, we can start from the concept of "guochao". From an internal point of view, the emergence of "national fashion" is preceded by the emergence of concepts such as "national style" and "new Chinese style", which are essentially the inheritance and

promotion of excellent Chinese traditional culture. The difference is that the context and object of communication have changed. "National style" and "new Chinese style" are more like "white snow and sun" for the general public, which can only be seen from afar. "This is the strongest voice of the times, as it integrates excellent traditional culture into the daily dress of the public and achieves a universal effect. From an external point of view, the influence of American and Japanese fashion on the 'national trend' cannot be underestimated. The American Wave, led by hip-hop and street culture, was initially a fringe and niche culture, essentially a dissatisfaction and rebellion against the traditional order of society, but was later absorbed by popular culture and evolved into a spirit of individuality, freedom and youthfulness. Although influenced by the "American Wave", the "Japanese Wave", with anime and second gen as its core, is subtly integrated into its own national culture, presenting a unique connotation of refinement, understatement and simplicity. Compared to the previous two, the connotations and extensions of the "national trend" in the new era have been expanded and are uniquely Chinese, reflecting the rapid development of China's current economy and the rise of Chinese culture, and showing new characteristics of the fusion of technology, culture and fashion.

"The development of Chinese fashion in China can be simplified into two phases, with the first phase (2003 to 2018) being a period of exploration. 2003 was the first time Chinese culture and fashion were combined on the international stage with the continued appearance of CLOT at New York and Paris Fashion Weeks. Combining elements such as the Shan Hai Jing, ink painting and traditional auspicious patterns with streetwear styles such as large silhouettes and graffiti won the recognition of young consumers, and the CLOT brand became the face of Chinese hip-branding [2]; subsequently, NPC (2009) and HI PANDA (2010) became the leaders of Chinese hip-branding one after another. The second phase (2018 to present) is the development period. 2018 is called the "first year of national trend"[3], on the one hand, the country's strong advocacy of cultural confidence; on the other hand, the Forbidden City cultural creation, China Li Ning, various online cultural creation platforms and other multi-point explosion, "national trend" The most representative brands include China Li Ning, Taiping Bird, Hui Li, Anta, Chu He He Xiang, Gaia Legend and so on.

In short, "national fashion" in a narrow sense refers to Chinese fashion brands, but it can no longer cover the multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary development of traditional Chinese clothing culture and fashion; in a broad sense, "national fashion" is a new era context, using Chinese traditional culture or In a broader sense, 'national fashion' is a collection of clothing that is characterised by elements of traditional Chinese culture or modern life and culture, in line with current fashion aesthetics and lifestyles.

## **2.2. Expressions of "national trend" clothing**

Professor Bian Xiangyang classifies contemporary Chinese style clothing as a "national trend" in fashion, "Hanfu" in specific contexts, and Chinese style wedding wear [5]. This classification covers all the elements of international dress, regular wear and outdoor wear.

Based on the international dress code's classification based on "time, place and occasion", combined with Professor Bian Xiangyang's classification of "new national style" clothing, "national fashion" clothing can be divided into Ceremonial clothing, everyday clothing and outdoor clothing. Ceremonial clothing includes: traditional Chinese costumes, new Chinese dresses with a fusion of Chinese and Western styles, and typical ethnic clothing; everyday clothing includes: "new national style" professional clothing, "new Chinese style" casual clothing, etc.; outdoor clothing includes: "national trend Outdoor clothing includes: "national trend" style sportswear, cold-proof clothing, etc. This classification method breaks through the dichotomy between East and West and facilitates the international promotion and development of "national fashion".

## **3. The Interpretative Space and Implication Structure of "National Tide" Clothing Design**

In Visual Culture: A Semiotic Study from Art History to Contemporary Art, Duan Lian, a Chinese Canadian, proposes the concept and method of "the space of symbolic interpretation and the structure of implication". These four dimensions are progressive and integrated to build the meaningful structure of visual culture and visual art [6]. Although the case in this article is an analysis of traditional Chinese ink paintings and contemporary artworks, the logical analysis method used is equally applicable to clothing design.

### 3.1. The space of interpretation of fashion design and the way of "national trend" of Li Ning brand

Based on the similarities and differences between design and art, and borrowing the concept and method of "symbolic interpretation space and meaning structure" proposed by Duan Lian, the author attempts to adjust the interpretation dimension of apparel design into: the dimension of context, the dimension of consumers (readers), the dimension of designers (brands), and the dimension of apparel works. The structure of clothing design connotation still adopts four dimensions: formal, rhetorical, aesthetic and conceptual, covering the whole process of conveying clothing design information from the referent to the referent. 2018 saw the appearance of the Chinese brand Li Ning's "Wudao" collection at New York Fashion Week, representing a new "national trend" and a historic shift. The author attempts to use symbols to interpret spatial theory. The author attempts to use the theory of symbolic interpretation of space to interpret the "Wudao" series of designs and to sort out the appropriate path of interpretation of clothing design works.

Firstly, the dimension of context. From a social perspective, external factors such as urban modernisation, rural revitalisation, cultural and tourism integration, the rise of the middle class and the growth of a new generation have provided the basis for the rapid development of Chinese brands. The exploration of "hip" style clothing in China, the expansion of the national style circle and the rapid spread of the "national trend" movement have helped "national trend" become the biggest context of the moment [7]. In 2018, Li Ning brand seized the opportunity to integrate the idea of "Tao" in traditional Chinese culture into its product design, catering to the current demand of young people for the fusion of sports, fashion and national style, igniting the international and domestic "national trend" market and becoming "It has ignited the international and domestic 'national trend' market and become the face of 'national trend' clothing (Figure 1).



Figure 1: 2018 Li Ning's New York Fashion Week "Wu Dao" collection

Secondly, the consumer (reader) dimension. The reader of clothing as a commodity is more the consumer, and meeting the needs of the consumer is the premise of design development. Founded in 1990, Li Ning sports brand, the initial consumers are the "post-70s" and "post-80s", but as this consumer group grows older, the concept of consumption continues to change, Li Ning brand needs to constantly adjust the product concept to meet the needs of the brand needs to adjust its product concept to meet the needs of the "old customers". In addition, in the face of the needs of the "post-90s" and "post-00s" young consumer groups for individual expression, aesthetic quality, cultural identity and other conceptual aspects, Li Ning brand proposed a new concept of "let the change happen the new concept of "Let Change Happen" and the marketing strategy of "single brand, multiple categories" in product development have gradually reversed the market trend and successfully transformed the brand. As the French semiotician Pierre Gero said, in many cases, people are not buying specific objects, but are looking for trends, youth and symbols of success [8].

Thirdly, the dimension of the designer (brand). For clothing design, the authorial dimension is the designer (brand) dimension. The designer is the core of a brand, especially the brand's founding designer, whose design philosophy and aesthetic constitute the brand gene; the brand is the embodiment of the designer's personality, and the brand style is the reproduction of the designer's style, which is the reason why many clothing brands are named after designers. In the process of design development, designers often choose design elements from the theme concept or brand positioning, design according to the culture of clothing and the laws of formal beauty, and finally use appropriate design techniques (rhetoric) to express the product in a certain aesthetic form.

The founder of the Li Ning brand, Mr Li Ning, is known as the 'Prince of Gymnastics' and has become the pride of the nation by winning several titles in the Olympic Games. The Li Ning brand is naturally characterised by a national sentiment and the 'national trend' symbol. The brand's slogans "Everything is possible" and "Let change happen" reflect the fighting spirit of China's new generation of young people, and "sport, fashion, technology" has become the symbol of the Li Ning brand. After 2018, the "National Style" concept was added to the existing design concept, forming a new unique brand symbol "Sports, Fashion, Technology, National Style", responding to the individual needs of the new generation of young consumers, making Li Ning brand a symbol of the new era of national Li Ning brand has become a symbol of the new era of national apparel brand.

Fourth, the dimension of clothing works. As a collection of material and consciousness, clothing has a unique symbolic system. In addition to wearable functions, fashion and style have become the goal of the brand's relentless pursuit. Chanel once said, "Fashion is always changing, but style is always there". Therefore, from the perspective of form and aesthetics, clothing products should constantly meet consumers' psychological and spiritual needs; on the other hand, from the perspective of consumerism, they should be fashionable and meet consumers' pursuit of fashion.

Before 2015, Li Ning's brand focused more on market development and propaganda and spent only 2%-3% on product development, which led to a crisis [9]; after 2015, the brand focused on product development, combining sports, fashion and technology to re-integrate into consumers' lives; after 2018, by constantly After 2018, the company has been able to successfully transform itself by constantly coming up with new design themes to meet consumers' aesthetic and conceptual demands. For example, the "Gnosis" series in 2018, the "Walk" series in 2019 (Figure 2), the "Walk to Paris" series in 2020 (Figure 3) and the "Gnosis" series in 2021. The "Wuzhuang" series in 2021 (Figure 4) reflects Li Ning's continued exploration of traditional Chinese culture and the gradual formation of its unique DNA of "sports, fashion, technology and national style".



Figure 2: 2019 A/W "Xing" collection      Figure 3: 2020 S/S "To Paris" collection



Figure 4: 2021 A/W "Wu Chuang Wu Yi" collection

In short, a more objective and comprehensive interpretation of clothing brands and design works can be achieved by starting from the four different dimensions of interpretation: the dimension of context, the dimension of the consumer (reader), the dimension of the designer (brand) and the dimension of the clothing work. The context is the overall background of the times and the premise for the construction of the apparel design system; the needs of the consumers (readers) are the engine of the design system, while the designers (brands) and their works build the meaning of the system, continuously driving the upward cycle of fashion development. So, how is the meaning of a garment constructed?

### 3.2. The meaningful structure of clothing design and the "national trend" concept of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics uniforms

The design of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics uniform is an integral part of the image landscape design of the Winter Olympics, with clear requirements for style, colour, fabric, pattern and workmanship, and is a typical proposition design. Technology and environmental protection, fashion and humanity, art and spirit constitute the overall concept of the design of the Winter Olympic Games uniforms [10]. The author attempts to explain the design implications of the Winter Olympics uniforms from four levels of clothing design: form, rhetoric, aesthetics and concept, and initially constructs the implication structure of clothing design.

Firstly, form. The form of clothing design works refers to the objective presentation of clothing, which can be intuitively perceived as the external representation of clothing style, shape, colour, fabric, pattern, technology and so on. Drawing on Roland Barthes' idea of the composition of clothing symbols, the reference to clothing is subdivided into three aspects: objects, supports and variables [11]. The object can be understood as the 'prototype' (classic style) of a garment, such as the classic women's suit, blouse, dress, etc. The support refers to the local details that make up the prototype of a garment, mainly including the collar, sleeves, body, placket, hem, etc. By varying the design of the support, the meaning of the garment can be changed. For example, the opening and closing of the collar: an open collar represents openness and acceptance; a closed collar suggests conservatism and closure. The variables are related to the prototypes and supports, including shape, colour, pattern, material and workmanship, and the change in the variables affects the change in the meaning of the whole garment. For example, the pattern element itself has a specific meaning, and when combined with the garment, it reinforces the uniqueness, regionalism and stylisation of the garment as a whole (Figure 5).

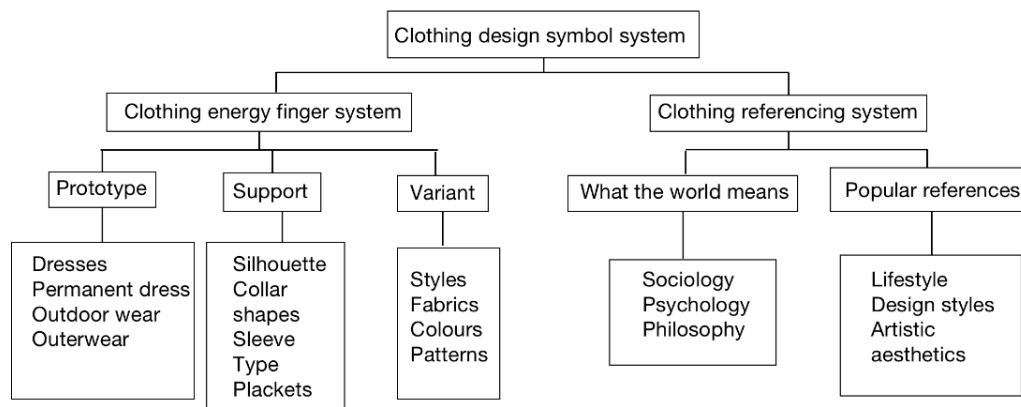


Figure 5: Clothing design symbol system

The Winter Olympics uniforms were analysed at the formal level: firstly, the prototype of the design was determined according to the occasion of its use as a cold-weather suit, which belongs to the function-based category of outdoor clothing, and refers to outdoor leisure, sports and adventure (Figure 6). The winter Olympic uniform adopts the classic style of winter wear, including the H silhouette, hood, shoulder sleeves and other classic elements [12], reflecting the simplicity of the shape, which is the embodiment of the concept of Green Olympics; secondly, the innovation at the support level is mainly reflected in the functional design of the collar, cuffs, zip, placket, pockets and other details, increasing its waterproof, anti-slip, breathable, night reflective and other functions, which refers to the concept of function first and life. The humanistic concept of "life above all" (Figure 7).

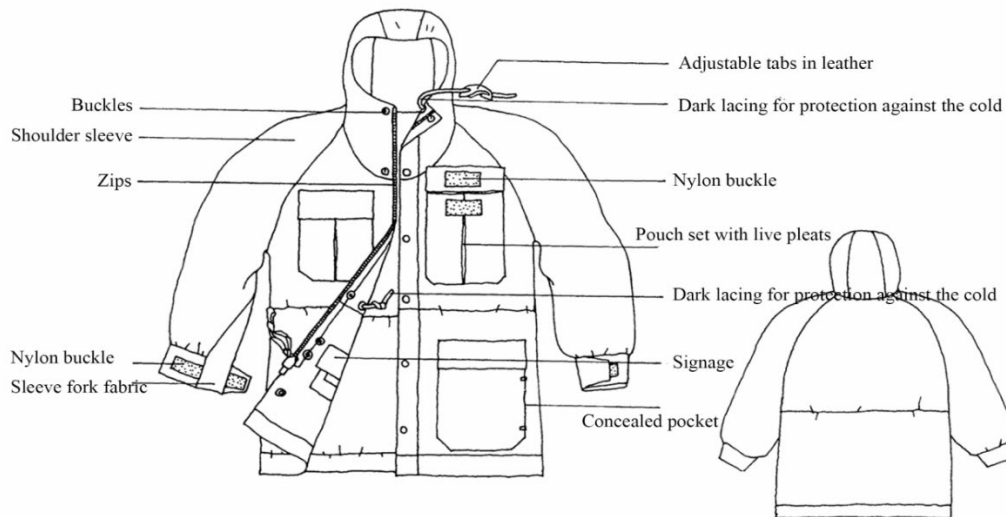


Figure 6: Classic style and function design of cold-proof clothing



Figure 7: Uniform design for 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games

Finally, innovation at the variable level is at the heart of the design of the Winter Olympics uniforms: in terms of pattern design, the combination of the ink and water landscape in the "Thousand Miles of Rivers and Mountains" by the Northern Song painter Wang Ximeng and the shape of the mountains and the Great Wall of the competition area in the core graphics of the Winter Olympics reflects the aesthetic mood of traditional Chinese ink painting while incorporating the speed and power of modern abstract patterns, naturally blending tradition and modernity into one, meaning traditional Chinese culture. "In terms of fabric, in order to improve the windproof, warmth and weight reduction effects of the cold-weather uniform, the uniform uses incandescent heat technology, waterproof and moisture-permeable technology, as well as graphene, poly-heat cotton and super-strong down materials; the detailed design incorporates a body temperature display device, night reflective safety strips, walkie-talkie hanging tabs, survival whistle and touch screen gloves, reflecting the fusion of technology and art.

Secondly, rhetoric. The rhetoric of clothing design refers to the design approach, i.e. the type of expression used to make innovative applications of design elements so as to subtly convey the design concept. For example, through the deformation, exaggeration and reconstruction of the pattern, the original meaning of the pattern is changed and given a new meaning. The irony of graffiti, dark patterns and witty slogans is often used in fashion design to subvert tradition and express individuality. Rhetorical techniques commonly used in fashion design include symbolism, reconstruction, exaggeration, emphasis, explicit metaphor and metaphor.

The design of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic uniforms makes clever use of allusion and symbolism. For example, the colours are used to distinguish between different job roles: the neutral 'Great

Wall Grey' reflects Beijing's 'City of the Two Olympic Games' and alludes to the objectivity and impartiality of the technical officials; the 'Kasumi Red' "The colours of black and red, the colours of the ancient Chinese rituals of heaven and earth, reflect the etiquette and civilisation of China as a kingdom of clothes; the blue of the sky, from the environment of snow and ice sports, symbolises liveliness and vividness. "The 'white snow' is visually harmonious and also has the auspicious meaning of 'a bountiful year of snow'.

Thirdly, aesthetics. The aesthetic standards of clothing design mainly include the rules of formal beauty and traditional clothing aesthetic culture. Firstly, as a general rule of art and design, the rules of formal beauty are of great significance in enhancing the rational aesthetics and analysis of clothing design. For example, the design of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics uniforms uses diagonal segmentation to unify the lower part of the top with the trousers, visually elongating the lower limbs of the athletes and making their bodies more slender, and the diagonal segmentation also increases the sense of movement. The vibrant and energetic colours of blue and red blend with the black, white and grey of Chinese ink and landscape, reflecting the collision and symbiosis of fashion and tradition.

Secondly, clothing is often influenced by regional cultures, forming different aesthetic tendencies. For example, oriental clothing places more emphasis on the harmony and unity of clothing and people, using fine craftsmanship to beautify clothing; western clothing emphasises the adaptability of clothing to people, using multi-piece structures to construct clothing and strengthen the beauty of the human body. The pursuit of beauty is the same between the two, but they use different ways of expressing themselves, drawing on each other as well as integrating and developing, as the development of the history of clothing has proven. To sum up, the study of regional culture in the contemporary global context is not simply about preservation, but focuses on heritage, allowing for new integration and development in a new era and on a new platform.

Fourthly, the concept. The concept of fashion design is the embodiment of the designer's (brand's) philosophy, which is mainly influenced by the social environment, politics, economy, culture and other factors, such as the concept of sustainable design, the concept of humanistic design, the concept of innovation of traditional dress culture, etc. Different designers (brands) are in different times and contexts, and the design concepts they convey are constantly changing. For example, from the initial European and American fringe culture and niche culture to the simplicity and sophistication of Japanese style, and then to the cultural heritage and individual expression of "national fashion", the boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred and broad, from non-mainstream to mainstream, reflecting the continuous progress of concepts.

The design of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympic Games uniforms has gradually reached the aesthetic context and the concept of the times from the choice of form and the application of rhetorical techniques, progressively, perfectly explaining the Olympic concept of green, sharing and openness. In conclusion, a progressive analysis of the four levels of clothing design: form, rhetoric, aesthetics and concept, can systematically grasp the extension and connotation of clothing works, and enhance the ability to interpret and connote the design of clothing design works.

#### **4. Conclusion**

From the above analysis, it is concluded that "national trend" fashion design has transcended the niche cultural tendencies of trendy brands and become popular culture; "national trend" has broken through the cage of age and class and embodied universal values, becoming the biggest context in China at present. From a semiotic point of view, the interpretation of clothing design by means of "interpretive space and implication structure" leads to the conclusion that the needs of consumers (readers) are the real proposition of contemporary clothing design, the concept of designers (brands) is the core of correct guidance of consumption, and clothing works are responsible for enhancing the aesthetics of the public. "Form, Rhetoric, Aesthetics and Perception" reveals the logical mode of thinking in apparel design, which is an important reference value for the construction of a meaningful system of apparel design.

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