

Emotional Design in Visual Identity of Urban Brand

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Abstract: *Emphasizing emotional design is the current trend in design. Incorporating human emotions into the design of urban brand identity can better enhance the value of the city itself. This paper first introduces the background of urban brand identity research. Secondly, starting from the application of emotional design in cities, it explores the concept and principles of emotional design in urban brand identity. Guided by theory, the brand visual recognition system of Xi'an is redesigned to reshape Xi'an's new brand identity. Ultimately, it asserts that urban brand identity design needs to satisfy people's emotional needs.*

Keywords: *Urban brand; Identity design; Emotional design; Visual identity*

1. Introduction

With the continuous development and innovation of the economy and society, people's identification with brands is becoming stronger. From a product to a company, everyone needs their own brand. The city, as the basic carrier of economy and culture, not only has physical features but also serves as a container for collective emotions, so it also needs to establish its own brand identity. The urban brand identity can both enhance the identity of the entire city and enhance the pride and emotional identification of citizens with the city. At the same time, it attracts the attention of foreign tourists and investors.

The famous American city planning designer, Kevin Andrew Lynch, revealed the influencing elements in urban brand design systematically and quite early, and had a broad influence on the development of global city brand design. The American cognitive psychologist, computer engineer, industrial designer, and one of the founders of the Cognitive Science Society, Donald A. Norman, divided the emotional experience into instinctive, behavioral, and reflective levels. Martin Lindstrom applied sensory experience research, emphasizing the importance of emotional experience, and emotional factors were introduced into urban brand design. Since then, emotional factors have been increasingly emphasized in the design of urban brand identity. In pursuing visual effects, it is generally believed that only visual designs that conform to public aesthetic psychology and move people can finally be recognized and receive attention.

A good city identity can effectively change human-city relations, fully mobilize people's comprehensive cognition, make the city's brand identity stand out among many cities, satisfy people's higher-level needs, enhance people's value recognition of urban cultural emotions, and stimulate city vitality. Extracting the emotional value of the city and incorporating it into the design of the urban brand identity, shaping an excellent city brand, improving the recognition of the city, effectively avoiding the copy-and-paste of modern cities, becomes more critical in the competition for resources.

2. Exploration of Emotional Design in Urban Brand Visual Identity

2.1. Application of Emotional Design in the Creation of Urban Brand Identity

The vitality of a city is supported by people. A city that incorporates emotional design can not only meet people's needs in terms of functionality, make people's lives convenient, but also bring more humanistic care. Therefore, people's attention to and requirements for the city brand identity have gradually turned to the psychological level unconsciously, and they have begun to intervene and guide the design of the city brand identity, from initially merely reflecting the city's spiritual connotation to now not only requiring a city brand identity to have city connotations, but also to conform to audience cognition, to form a city brand identity that everyone pays attention to and is willing to accept, to avoid as much as possible people's indifference, dislike, or even resistance, thereby creating a more harmonious

relationship between people and the city. [1]

2.2. Emotional Design Concept in Urban Brand Identity

The brand is the expression of emotion, and consumers can gain emotional experiences in the products through the brand. Similarly, for a city, an emotional urban brand identity is a necessary factor for quantitative functional cities to qualitative humanized cities. The city is visible and readable, the city shows the city's cultural connotation, spiritual quality, reflects humanistic care through symbols and information. Through the emotional city brand identity, the city's spirit, behavior, information, culture, and quality can be better interpreted by people.

Taking emotionalization as the leading ideology of urban brand identity design brings many challenges to traditional urban brand identity design and current Chinese urban brand identity design. Based on these challenges, the corresponding transformation of cultural, value, and design views towards urban brand identity is the premise for thinking and proposing specific new design suggestions, so as to determine the guiding ideology and specific requirements of the design.

2.3. Emotional Design Principles in Urban Brand Identity

2.3.1. Simplicity of Shape

Between graphics, they depend on each other, where there are graphics, there must be shapes. Identity must be expressed through different forms to form conveyable graphic information. How to handle the relationship between graphics and shapes will have a direct impact on the degree to which people accept information. The completeness and usefulness of the information conveyed are two necessary conditions for the existence of graphics. Graphics, as the medium of communication between humans and the environment, therefore have symbolic significance and specific functions. The emergence of graphic symbols makes complex information easy to understand. Graphic symbols, due to their clear and simple characteristics, have a high recognition rate. To a certain extent, they break the limitations of conveying information directly with text. Among visual symbols, we generally think that color is sensual, text is rational, and the existence of graphics has both sensuality and rationality. Designers design graphics according to the connotation of what they want to express, conveying rational information through sensual representation, thus giving graphics the characteristics of rich form and variable expression. Graphics are actually a symbol used to convey the specific concept and connotation of things. The design of the city brand identity is to transform the designed graphics into a visual symbol to express the personality and spiritual connotation of the city. [2]

2.3.2. The Implications of Color

Psychological studies show that half of people prioritize shapes, and the other half prioritize colors. In fact, color and shape are equally important elements in imagery. However, because they are intertwined and the selection of colors based on design themes has certain limitations, it is often more feasible to discuss shape before color. In cities, visual identification systems expressed through color are the most eye-catching. They can intuitively convey the city's main features with a high degree of recognizability. Psychological theories tell us that color can stimulate our visual senses through its own characteristics, and thus have a suggestive psychological effect. Therefore, color can give people cognitive and emotional suggestions.

2.3.3. The Appeal of Layout

Emotional layout arrangement is mainly used in the city's brand visual identification system, making the content in the system more intuitively presented to the audience and attracting their attention. Layout arrangement is not designed for formality, and a well-formatted layout does not necessarily have the ability to accurately convey information. A truly audience-oriented layout arrangement needs to attract people's focus to the visual information being conveyed, and is designed according to the priority of the information to be conveyed. [3-5] In the design of city brand identity, the layout design for the main logo can either combine text and identity or solely use graphics to express the city's features. Therefore, when designing the city's brand identity, it is necessary to decide which method is easier to convey information and gain audience approval based on the city's own characteristics and the cultural level of the audience.

3. Emotional Design Strategy for Xi'an as a Food Tourism Destination Brand Identity

3.1. Regional Culture and Special Food in Xi'an

3.1.1. Definition and Characteristics of Regional Culture

When defining the regional culture of Xi'an, we must first clarify its geographical location, as regional culture develops within a specific geographical area. Xi'an is the capital of Shaanxi Province, and Shaanxi's regional culture is academically known as "Sanqin Culture". Xi'an lies in the Guanzhong area of the Sanqin cultural block and is also the core of Guanzhong culture. Thus, the regional cultural characteristics that appear in Xi'an city come from Sanqin Culture and Guanzhong regional culture. The genetic basis of the "Xi'an culture" and its representative Guanzhong culture was established in the early Western Zhou Dynasty. Therefore, to dig into the regional culture reflected in Xi'an's urban culture, we first need to analyze and sort out the Sanqin Culture and Guanzhong regional culture that Xi'an belongs to.

3.1.2. Sanqin Culture

"Sanqin Culture" is named after the geographical positioning of Sanqin land. After the fall of the Qin Dynasty, Xiang Yu divided Qin's land into three parts, hence the name Sanqin. In modern times, Sanqin generally refers to the areas of Guanzhong, northern Shaanxi, and southern Shaanxi governed by Shaanxi. "Sanqin Culture" refers to the regional culture that has been produced and continues to this day in the Sanqin land. The Sanqin culture formed during the Zhou and Qin periods, matured in the Han and Tang periods, and began to decline in the Song and Yuan periods. The connotations of Sanqin culture include not only the rich historical relics and cultural remains in the region, but also folklore, systems, art, religion, thought, academia, philosophy, ethics, as well as views on nature, life, and values.

3.1.3. Guanzhong Regional Culture

Historically, the concept of Guanzhong appeared during the Han Dynasty. "Guanzhong" historically refers to the area between the four "guan" or passes: Hangu Pass, Wuguan Pass, Sanguan Pass, and Xiaoguan Pass. The current Guanzhong, or Guanzhong Plain, stretches from Tongguan in the east to Baoji in the west, borders the Qinling Mountains to the south and the northern Shaanxi plateau to the north. It is known as the "800-li Qin River", including Baoji, Xianyang, Xi'an, Tongchuan, and Weinan. The Guanzhong region, centered on Xi'an, has been one of the important birthplaces of the Chinese nation since ancient times. At various times, this area has attracted talented individuals and been a center of cultural prosperity, giving rise to the magnificent imperial civilization. The Guanzhong Plain has a flat terrain, fertile soil, and abundant water sources. The Guanzhong region is cold in winter and hot in summer with little rainfall and strong sunlight. Guanzhong's regional culture includes many aspects, which can be categorized into material culture, system culture, behavior culture, and mindset culture.

3.1.4. Development of Traditional Snacks in Xi'an

Located at the heart of China, connecting the Yellow River and the Yangtze River, Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese nation. It is full of colorful historical stories and boasts a rich food culture. Shaanxi cuisine is one of the important branches of Chinese food culture, mainly focusing on snacks. These snacks capture both the roughness and wildness of northern cuisine, as well as the delicacy and grace of southern food. Xi'an, as the capital of Shaanxi and a city that has been the capital of thirteen dynasties, has inherited a rich variety of cuisines and gathers the essence of national food characteristics, making it a culinary treasure.

3.2. Emotional Design Strategy for the Visual Identification System of Xi'an City Brand

3.2.1. Emotional Design Strategy at the Instinctual Level

(1) Sensual shaping of brand symbols. The emotional design at the instinctual level focuses on the pleasure that the brand brings to consumers through senses. The recognition of brand symbols requires human sensory organs to perceive, feel, and form an impression. Sensuality refers to using people's multi-sensory perceptual abilities to intuitively make emotional evaluations of things, to achieve a mental state of consumer psychology and emotional perception. This can promote communication and interaction between consumers and the brand, allowing consumers to gain emotional experience and psychological satisfaction.

Emotionality of color: Color is an important part of brand identity design and is the easiest factor to

perceive emotional characteristics. It has intuitive communicative power and strong infectivity. People are easily attracted by color, and a brand identity with harmonious and vivid colors often gives people a more accurate understanding of the emotions expressed by the brand, thereby better arousing people's related associations and memories and leaving a pleasant emotional impression of the brand. Therefore, the selection of brand colors should focus on the consistency and match between color and brand emotion. The selected colors can well convey the brand philosophy and brand emotion.

Sensualization of logo graphics: The logo graphic is one of the important factors for people to visually perceive the brand. The brand logo is an important identity conveyance for consumers to recognize the brand. It has the characteristics of flexible form, individuality, and contemporary features. It can overcome cultural and regional barriers and make it easy for people from different countries and regions to distinguish and remember. In today's fast-paced information age, simple and minimalist modern aesthetic logos are more likely to touch consumers' emotions.[6]

(2) Storytelling visual representation. Every brand has a unique brand story behind it, arousing people's curiosity and memories of the past and easily arousing people's emotions. The behavioral level of emotional design gives people an interactive emotional experience, reflecting how to communicate well with consumers in brand visual identity design. Storytelling can stimulate consumer's emotional interactive experiences. The brand story refers to the metaphorical story about the brand, the description of brand culture, meaning, etc. Integrating the brand's story and feelings into the brand's visual design and telling it to the audience can not only convey the brand's values to consumers, but also more likely to gain the emotional recognition of consumers. The storytelling visual representation can make the brand more humanized, adding a halo to the product and creating emotional added value. It promotes the brand's historical culture in the form of a story, demonstrating the value and characteristics of the brand.

3.2.2. Emotional Design Strategy at the Behavioral Level

(1) Interactive dissemination through new media platforms. The emotional design at the behavioral level focuses on the pleasure, ease of recognition, etc., that people get from using the brand products, and the emotions that arise from interactions with the brand. In today's era of rich information and materials, the carrier for communicating brand identity has undergone significant changes, increasing the interactivity in space, including broader content, and creating more possibilities for modern brand identity design. When disseminating brand visual identity, we should make good use of the characteristics of new media dissemination, enhance user experience, narrow the emotional relationship between the brand and consumers, and enhance the emotional experience of consumers. We should create official accounts on various social media platforms, regularly post updates, and can also combine traditional festivals, along with some interesting and personal ad languages and copywriting, to close the distance with contemporary consumers.

(2) Developing city brand derivatives to promote city cultural characteristics. In the visual design of the city brand, the design of derivatives is indispensable. By analyzing and applying Xi'an's unique food culture elements, a series of cultural and creative products and re-packaged local specialties of Xi'an can be designed to attract the eyes of foreign tourists while understanding the local customs.

3.2.3. Reflective Level Emotional Design Strategy

(1) Personalization to expand the emotional connotation of the brand. In today's age of abundant information and material, people are increasingly pursuing the individualization and emotional experience of brands. Psychologist Carl Jung defined "individualization" with a dual meaning: firstly, to become a unique and independent individual; secondly, to rebuild psychological completeness and unity. Just like people, brands also have personalities. A brand's personality is its unique cultural connotation, which can serve as an advanced spiritual level connected by emotion, and also as a differentiator from other brands. In this era of advanced media technology, the brand is no longer an irreversible one-way communication item. A brand with a unique internal emotion can better establish emotional connections with contemporary consumers and create brands with emotional temperature. Visual symbols are a carrier, they can carry the emotions of the brand, convey the characteristics and advantages of the brand to consumers. Most of the time, we may not remember the products, but we can deeply remember the difference conveyed by their identity. When a brand has a distinct emotional personality, consumers can easily resonate emotionally with the brand. [7]

(2) Introducing Shaanxi dialect to deepen cultural emotions. Modern brands cannot just emphasize past stories. They should inject more cultural emotions in the new era and diversify the expansion of brand cultural connotations. The emotional pursuit of culture is also a consumer's pursuit of self-value. This level of emotion represents the highest level of brand belief, enough to allow consumers to establish

brand loyalty through the cognition they have formed. In the visual design of Xi'an's specialty food brands, you can expand from cultural emotions. For example, designing posters based on Shaanxi dialect can increase the sense of identity of the local people on the one hand, and deepen the public's understanding and knowledge of Xi'an on the other hand.

4. Conclusion

Emotional design in visual identity of urban brand is based on the most basic recognition needs but emphasizes human emotional needs. It aims to increase people's familiarity and sense of belonging to the city and to shorten the distance between the city and people. In essence, it is a sublimation of the functionality of the city brand identity. In terms of visual performance, it can be summarized into three design principles: first, using simple graphic elements to enhance the recognizability of its city brand identity; second, using suggestive colors to enhance the appeal of its city brand identity; and third, using unique layout arrangements to strengthen the attractiveness of its city brand identity to people. Designing the city brand identity according to these design principles will not only improve people's cognition and recognition of the information conveyed by the city brand but also make the relationship between people and the city more harmonious.

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