

PROCEEDINGS ARTICLE

Research on the Visual Image Design and Communication Studies of China's Time-Honored Brands

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ABSTRACT

The overarching goal of this article is to conduct specific research on the current status of China's time-honored brands and refer to communication studies as the theoretical support based on the new media era. This study analyzes the visual image of time-honored brands, including brand visual national culture, and brand communication. At the same time, from the perspective of communication, it analyzes the visual image and cultural attributes of old brands and their derivatives. Thus, these studies provide a considerable reference for the brand visual image innovation of Chinese time-honored brands.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The extensive and profound Chinese culture has nourished many well-known time-honored brands. The time-honored brand is usually regarded as a symbol of exquisite craftsmanship, simple packaging, excellent service, profound cultural heritage, and a good reputation. It is favored by consumers for its characteristic of word of mouth. However, the existence of time-honored brands in China is in crisis. Since the founding of New China, due to the rapid development of mass production and commodity economy, large quantities of Chinese time-honored brands have been unable to adapt and are on the verge of bankruptcy. In 1991, only about 1,600 China time-honored brands were recognized, which implies that the time-honored brands are in struggling.

Until now, some well-known time-honored brands still survived by fluke, such as Chinese medicine brand "Tongrentang", scissors and utensils "Zhang Xiaoquan", delicious pickles "Liubiju", silk shop "Ruifuxiang", national wine "Moutai", and skincare products "Xie Fuchun". Image is an important element for hotels, a brand acts as the most influential element

in services because of its natural uniqueness like perishability, inseparability, tangibility and heterogeneity [1].

Around the world, many traditional brands are struggling with their own decline [2]. To protect and inherit the time-honored brands, in 2006, the Ministry of Commerce announced the China Time-Honored Brands Identification Standards (Trial) and the Rejuvenation of Time-Honored Brands Project plan to protect the existing long-established brands. Subsequently, the government introduced the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, One Belt One Road, and other related policies to tell the world the story of China's old brands.

However, the China time-honored brand faces dual pressures from domestic and foreign competitions, which has caused obstacles to the development of the old brands. Especially in China, there are differences in the cultures of different ethnic groups, geographical locations, and regions, etc. [3]. As a typical representative of conventional business, time-honored brands are supposed to innovate and consumer-centric concepts to arm themselves, and adapt to the new environment that constructed by the

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new media, and learn the rich experience of the visual image and brand development from foreign brands. In other words, China's Time-honored Brands should adapt to the changes of the times and seek new ideas for image shaping to way out.

2. RESEARCH PROBLEMS STATEMENT

The biggest obstacle to the inheritance of time-honored brands is the lack of in-depth exploration of the core Chinese essence of traditional brands (Sun Minggui, 2018). At present, scholars have fully taken into account the extreme particularity of time-honored brands, and have conducted rich theoretical research on the definition of time-honored brands, brand extension, nostalgic culture, customer satisfaction, communication media, and cultural inheritance. This research is based on cultural communication, with the theme of cultural attributes of time-honored brand visual images in different periods and the visual image of parent brands and derivatives in visual attributes, to provide data support for better establishing the theoretical model of time-honored brand visual image communication.

At present, research on brand visual image of time-honored brands mostly explores the cultural heritage and brand visual image. This paper mainly discusses the relevance of brand culture and visual image, as well as consumers' perception of brand visual image

In addition, most of the existing research focuses on the positioning of China's Time-honored Brands, cultural marketing strategies, nostalgic advertising, service staff quality and consumer cognition. Most of them are theoretical and reasoning research, but overall empirical research is limited. This study redesigned the image of China's Time-honored Brands to verify the rationality of the discussion.

Redesign of the brand visual image of an established brand should not be regarded as a simple renewal. This is an extreme case, that is, the image design of a brand conforms to positioning of the time-honored brand, but consumers do not buy it. Therefore, the research focus of this topic is how to make the redesign of China's Time-honored Brands meet consumers' perception and experience expectations.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions include the following:

1. What is the relationship between time-honored brand visual image and brand culture, consumer culture, and corporate culture?

2. What are the primary issues encountered in the brand visual image and communication of time-honored brands in the new media era
3. How can the extension brand better inherit and innovate the parent brand culture and visual image?
4. Is it feasible to spread the image of time-honored brands (resolved in terms of inheritance and innovation of brand visual elements, market conditions, consumer perception, new media technology, etc.)?
5. What is the significance of studying the visual image of time-honored brands for the inheritance and dissemination of traditional culture?

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

4.1. General Objective

The primary goal of this research is to study the time-honored brand visual image from the perspective of communication studies.

4.2. Specific Objectives

The first is to explore the image development context of time-honored brands. Specifically: It is important to analyze the relationship between time-honored brand visual image and brand culture, consumer culture, and corporate culture during the period of the Republic of China to New China.

The second is to explore the primary issues facing the image and communication of time-honored brands in the new media era.

The third is to explore the better cultural heritage and innovation strategies for the visual image of time-honored brands.

The fourth is to explore strategies to solve the inadequacy of time-honored brand formation and dissemination from the aspects of inheritance and innovation of brand visual elements, market conditions, consumer perception, new media technology, etc.

The fifth is to explore the cultural inheritance and communication significance of the visual image of time-honored brands from the perspective of communication science.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Through a literature search, it is found that research on brand visual image and brand visual image is

relatively abundant in recent years, but the research on the visual image of time-honored brands based on the communication perspective is relatively limited under the context of the new media era. In addition, there is no comprehensive system for the visual image of time-honored brands. Therefore, there are not plenty of papers on the visual image of time-honored brands based on communication and semiotics, the papers on practical research account for a large proportion and the theoretical support is not enough, but the related literature for references are sufficient. Sun Shaojun (2013) studied the development of time-honored brands in the past 100 years, combined with historical, political, socio-economic, cultural concepts, aesthetic trends, and the development of art design, and analyzed the logo, CI, and poster design in the visual image design of Chinese time-honored brands. In addition, he also summarized the visual image and innovation of time-honored brands, but did not analyze the current mainstream design style and aesthetics [4]. Wei Mengjiao (2015) exploits the innovative design practice of the visual image of Jiangsu Nanjing pastry brand "Little Suzhou" as a demonstration, advocating that the original culture and development context of time-honored brands should be fully respected, and new concepts and ideas are supposed to integrate to promote brand culture in the new era. In the paper *How the Cultural Attributes of Time-honored Brands Affect Its Extension Evaluation*, Zhou (2011) used experimental data and questionnaires to analyze the research topics, but did not conduct developmental induction and summary based on qualitative research methods and lacked practice. Liu & Tian (2012) discussed the innovation issue of the time-honored brands. They suggested that time-honored brands should innovate brand culture from the aspects of culture, personality, image, brand management, promotion, etc. Qin (2014) determine the relationship between consumers' perception and recognition and purchase intention of time-honored products, and pointed out that time-honored brands should satisfy consumers' individual needs through passive brand innovation and win brand reputation. Wei & Huang (2016) summarized the internal and external factors that affect brand innovation companies, and the empirical analysis concluded that the current brand innovation characteristics of Chinese time-honored enterprises are to emphasize brand promotion and image innovation, and ignore brand management innovation [5].

In addition, Guo (2018) defines the dimensions of nostalgic culture and clarifies the key factors for the inheritance of time-honored brand assets under nostalgic culture. He advocated that the dimensions of

nostalgic culture will affect the cultural heritage of time-honored brands. In addition, he also suggested that theoretical research should be constantly updated with changes in values, external environment, and social situational factors [6]. Yue Wenxin et al. (2020) focus on the network communication of time-honored brands [7].

They believe that the utilization and management of network communication hold the capacity to enhance user stickiness and external communication. Keller (1999) strongly suggests that methods such as updating the spokesperson, extending the advertising cycle, and focusing on the analysis of competing products can greatly improve the strength, praise, and uniqueness of the brand's visual image. After 2000, foreign scholars' research on time-honored brands reached a peak. For example, Deere's book *Brand Revolution* mentioned the brand visual image of time-honored brands. Although it discussed the issues of corporate transformation and management in great detail, the visual image was the design is rarely mentioned [8]. Japan, South Korea and other Asian countries are facing the problem of the image of time-honored brands similar to China. However, Japan has a clear positioning of local culture and commercial characteristics, retaining a large number of traditional techniques and local brands, and its design and positioning have formed a typical "Japanese style".

As the above shows, time-honored brands have now emerged with the following developmental obstacles: blindly following fashion trends, outdated visual images, improper communication strategies, deepening gaps with consumers, and loss of loyal consumers. Therefore, research on how the image of time-honored brands caters to the trend of the times with the correct attitude, conforms to consumer psychology and the environment, and makes good use of various communication media is very significant. The enterprise makes its best efforts to create the life value for the vitality of the time-honored brand visual image, to activate its infinite cultural charm.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In terms of methodology, the combination method of qualitative and quantitative will be adopted as the research methodology of this research. In practice, most researchers agree that the mixed method produces a richer and more comprehensive understanding of a research area. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data can confirm the limitations of one data type are balanced with the advantages of another data type, thereby improving

the efficiency of evaluation. This will ensure improved understanding by integrating different ways of understanding. Most assessments will collect both quantitative and qualitative data, but it is crucial to plan how to combine them. The specific instruments of this research are as follows.

6.1. Literature Review

This method mainly screens text, graphics, audiovisual books, newspapers, and audio materials globally, and conducts mining in the form of synthesis, induction, and integration of selected materials. The main topic of this research is to sort out the historical context of the visual image of time-honored brands, and analyze the image and brand culture of time-honored brands, consumer culture, and corporate culture in the period before the Republic of China, the Republic of China to the founding of New China, and after the reform and opening up. In addition, this thesis summarizes the tonalities of graphics, colors, and panel designs in different periods.

6.2. Case Study

The great advantage of case analysis is that the expression of the image of the time-honored brand is more convincing and targeted. This research will analyze the successful cases of the transformation of time-honored brands in recent years, and analyze the cultural and visual images of the parent brand and extended brands, to obtain the characteristics of the brand culture and visual symbol language change of the time-honored brand visual image.

6.3. Questionnaire Survey Method

The design of this research plan is to design a set of visual images of "time-honored brands" based on

previous surveys to compare with the existing visual images. This questionnaire selects two forms of online delivery and field delivery, through which the feasibility of this study is demonstrated. Customers' brand identification is regarded as a high degree of brand understanding and recognition [9]. 100 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, of which 92 were valid questionnaires. Among them, there are 51 males and 49 females, aged 26-50, accounting for 47.83%. The academic qualifications are dominated by High School and Secondary School and College and Undergraduate, accounting for 72.82% (Table 1). The highest proportions of unbearable and disliked were 21.74% and 38.04%, respectively. The proportion of indifference is at least 9.78% (Table 2).

Customers evaluate brand experience not only for the brand's authenticity but also for its creativity [10]. According to the survey, 12 index points of time-honored brands were selected to investigate the visual image of time-honored brands (Table 3). The ranking of index A is $A1 > A6 > A4 > A5 > A3 > A2$. A1 has the highest selection rate, reaching 91%, and A2 has the lowest at 32%. The ranking of index B is $B3 > B5 > B6 > B2 > B4 > B1$. B3 has the highest selection rate at 85%, and B1 the lowest at 45% (Fig. 1).

7. EXPERIMENT AND QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY METHOD

The design of this research is to design a set of questionnaires on the subject of comparing the visual image of the time-honored brand with the existing visual image based on the previous survey. This questionnaire will launch in two forms, online and on-site, to demonstrate the feasibility of this study.

Item	Indicator	Quantity	Proportion
Gender	Male	51	55.43%
	Female	49	53.26%
Age	-18	12	13.04%
	18-25	18	19.57%
	26-35	20	21.74%
	36-50	24	26.09%
	51+	18	19.57%
	Education Level	Primary school	5
Middle school		8	8.70%
High school and secondary school		29	31.52%
College and undergraduate		38	41.30%
Master's degree and above		12	13.04%

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents to the Time-Honored Brand Questionnaire.

Question 8: What do you think of the visual experience of the visual image of the time-honored brand?			
Option	Statistics	Diagram	Proportion
Like	13		14.13%
As it should be	15		16.30%
It doesn't matter	9		9.78%
Cannot stand	20		21.74%
Dislike	35		38.04%

Table 2. Selected topics for part z of the questionnaire.

Functional Breakdown	
A1 Brand vision	B1 Brand concept
A2 Brand consistency	B2 Brand confidence
A3 Personalization	B3 Ethnic culture
A4 Brand products	B4 Brand recognition
A5 Brand endorsement	B5 Brand after-sales
A6 Brand communication	B6 Brand service

Table 3. Function points of time-honored brand building.

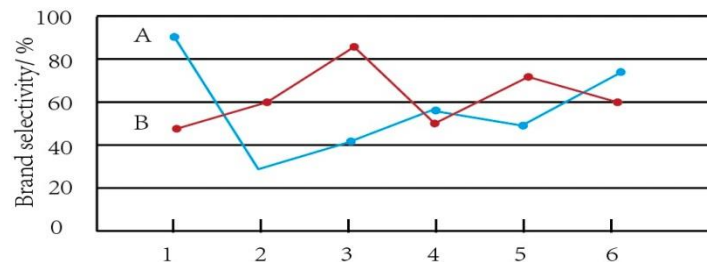


Figure 1. Brand metrics selection rate.

8. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

8.1. Providing Reference for Time-Honored Brands Visual Image and Communication Theory

The time-honored brand has the dual attributes of cultural heritage and artistic design. In other words, it not only contains the connotation of Chinese traditional culture, but is also an important part of the field of artistic design. The corporate philosophy of time-honored brands mostly follows the refined and introverted Chinese culture, but they appear "old" and "rustic" in their visual image. At present, academic circles have done some research on time-honored brands, but there are still relatively few time-honored brands from the current branding perspective. This paper aims to realize the differentiated development path of time-honored brands, and summarize the

visual image shaping methods and communication strategies of inheriting time-honored brands.

8.2. Providing Reference for Innovation and Brand Visual Image of Time-Honored Brands

Brand visual image design should continue to change and innovate along with consumers' aesthetics. The core of brand visual image design is to grasp the characteristics of time-honored brands in different periods and enrich the content of modern art by combing their development context. The visual image is related to the first impression of Chinese time-honored brands in the minds of consumers. Therefore, the purpose of the visual expression of time-honored brands is to increase brand competitiveness. There are humanistic viewpoints and artistic concepts behind the visual cultural connotation of the brand. In other words, the richness

of graphics, text, and other visual languages of time-honored brands does not only exist on the surface, otherwise, the corporate culture and brand concept behind the organization is its enduring magic weapon.

8.3. Promoting Traditional Chinese Culture and Enhancing National Self-Confidence

China's time-honored brand visual image is an indispensable part of conventional culture. Every time-honored brand hides a legendary story, showing long history of Chinese culture. Culture and creativity are considered important development factors [3]. The image design of time-honored brands follows the trend of continuous changes in the public's aesthetics, and innovates the artistic characteristics of traditional culture. The retro style and the Chinese wave provide an extremely appropriate opportunity for the revival of time-honored brands, so that time-honored brands can truly realize the internationalization goals of national brands and increase people's sense of identity and pride in the Chinese nation.

9. RESULTS

The development of domestic time-honored brands is relatively serious compared to plagiarism. There are few personalization factors between brands, and relatively speaking, they are more blindly imitating and learning from other brands.

The graphic elements and color elements in the vision lack innovation. The blindly retro and Chinese-style graphics and colors make the brand's visual image relatively old, giving people a local feeling, and it is more difficult to go international.

The visual image of the brand shows its status and value, and the brand image appears to be splendid and cumbersome, or the fresh and elegant of the retro Song Dynasty.

10. DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the development of time-honored brand image and the characteristics of visual image performance in different stages of development, and focuses on the analysis of these characteristics. However, future research may not only be limited to samples of time-honored catering brands but also attempt to study traditional catering enterprises [11]. Therefore, establishing a strong brand image is inevitable to ensure the overall organizational success [12]. The study did not define the characteristics of time-honored brand image in each industry and the characteristics of the visual image of time-honored brands in different places.

11. CONCLUSION

Through a series of investigations, strategies have been drawn to promote traditional Chinese culture and enhance national self-confidence. At the same time, it provides a reference for the innovation and brand visual image of time-honored brands; it provides a reference for the visual image and communication theory of time-honored brands. Brand identity as a link between brand and customer consistency promotes customers' intention to recommend [13]. However, this paper does not conduct an empirical analysis based on the specific time-honored brands, but draws the corresponding communication strategies for time-honored brands.

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