Analysing the Value of Nanjing Traditional Culture in "Blue Whale" Brand Image Design

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Abstract: Nanjing, with a history of approximately 2,500 years since its founding, is a cultural metropolis known as the "Cultural Hub of the World," the "Ancient Capital of Six Dynasties," and the "Capital of Ten Dynasties." Its rich traditional culture provides a solid foundation for urban renewal. This paper explores the relationship between traditional culture and urban renewal in With the rise of "national trend" culture and local design consciousness, how to effectively integrate traditional cultural elements in the brand visual system has become an important issue in the field of visual communication. Based on Nanjing's urban culture, this paper focuses on the whole process of "Blue Whale" coffee brand image design, and systematically analyses the translation path and visual performance of Nanjing's regional culture in the brand's vision through literature review, field research, user survey and design practice. The study shows that Nanjing has rich intangible cultural resources and urban narrative qualities, which can provide profound cultural support for the brand. Through multi-dimensional reconstruction of cultural symbols such as graphic language, colour system, font design, etc., the "Blue Whale" brand has successfully constructed a visual system that combines cultural recognition and visual appeal. The three-dimensional integration strategy of "cultural authenticity-visual unity-user acceptance" proposed in this paper provides a cultural visual construction paradigm for other local brands.

Keywords: Regional Culture; Brand Image Design; Nanjing Culture; Visual Communication

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Under the background of the rapid development of digital technology and the continuous evolution of cultural communication, brand image has gone beyond the traditional commercial marketing function and become an important medium for transmitting cultural values and shaping identity. With the interweaving of globalisation and localisation, brand design is transforming from a single "visual identity" to a deep-seated "cultural expression". Consumers' concern for regional identity and cultural belonging has pushed brands to reflect local cultural connotations while possessing international universality.[5]

As a famous historical and cultural city, Nanjing is rich in cultural resources and visual symbols, providing unique inspiration for brand design.

However, in practice, the expression of traditional cultural elements in most brands still remains at the surface decoration, lacking systematic cultural refinement and contemporary expression strategies, resulting in a lack of brand image recognition and cultural infectivity.

Taking "Blue Whale" brand as an example, this study explores how to integrate typical elements of Nanjing's regional culture (such as cloud brocade, lanterns, Ming City Wall, etc.) with the modern brand visual language, and build a brand visual system with cultural depth and contemporary aesthetics, with the aim of promoting the branding communication of regional culture and the development of modern visual design.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study has important theoretical and practical significance by exploring the application value of Nanjing traditional culture in the brand image design of "Blue Whale". Theoretically, it expands the research dimension of the visual integration of regional culture and brand, proposes a brand cognitive path driven by cultural visual translation and cultural identity, and provides a new paradigm for local design. Practically, this study provides methodological references for the modern expression of

Nanjing's cultural symbols, enhances the cultural recognition and communication power of local brands, and at the same time provides feasible paths for local cultural and educational brands to build visual systems with cultural depth and market adaptability.[2]

1.3 Research Objectives

(1) In order to study the application and expression of Nanjing traditional cultural elements in the visual image design of the "Blue Whale" brand, systematically sort out representative regional cultural symbols, and explore the cultural connotation, visual characteristics and communication function of these elements in the construction of the brand image.

(2) In order to analyse the effect of Nanjing cultural elements in the practice of "Blue Whale" visual image design, assess its performance in visual aesthetics, cultural communication and user perception, summarise its advantages and shortcomings, and put forward targeted optimisation suggestions.

1.4 Research Questions

(1) What are the most representative regional cultural symbols in Nanjing traditional culture? How are these elements refined, translated and used to build cultural identity and visual recognition in the visual image of Blue Whale?

(2) In the visual design of the Blue Whale brand that integrates elements of Nanjing culture, how does it perform in terms of visual aesthetics, cultural communication and user perception? What are the advantages and problems of user acceptance and feedback on these designs?

1.5 Scope and Methodology

This study focuses on the "Blue Whale" coffee brand in Nanjing, using a combination of literature review, field research, user survey and design practice, and adopting a qualitative and quantitative analysis model. The study spans from March 2024 to July 2025, with a sample of 200 questionnaires, 3 in-depth interviews, and research in key cultural and commercial areas in Nanjing, including brand and marketing practitioners, design and cultural experts, and consumers.

2. Literature Review

This chapter systematically analyses the function, development and trend of visual communication design. Visual communication design is not only a combination of graphics and colours, but its core task is to achieve the effective transmission of information, the establishment of emotional resonance, the identification of brand identity and the expression of cultural values through visual language. Under the current context of social and cultural diversity and media integration, visual communication design presents 'visual regeneration of local culture', 'narrative communication', 'multi-sensory experience' and 'social participation orientation'. 'social participation orientation' and other new trends. These trends provide a new direction for design to intervene in the dissemination and innovation of traditional culture.[8]

Subsequently, this chapter discusses the composition of brand visual identity system (VIS) and its cultural translation strategy. Through 'cultural visual translation', traditional cultural graphics, colours, fonts and symbols can be systematically transformed into brand identity language. For example, in the context of Nanjing's regional culture, visual symbols can be extracted from the 'gold and blue colour scheme' of Yunjin, the texture of the bricks of the Ming city wall, the night lights of the Qinhuai River, etc. Then, through the simplification of graphics, low-saturation treatment of colours, and the reconstruction of fonts, the fusion of tradition and modernity can be achieved, so that the brand image can be efficiently communicated across mediums and scenarios. The brand image can be efficiently communicated across media and scenes.

Further, this chapter introduces the role of 'cultural narrative' in the construction of visual system. Cultural narrative stresses that a brand is not only a collection of 'identification symbols', but also a process of constructing 'contextualised stories'. Taking 'Blue Whale' brand as an example, it can focus on the spirit of the literati along the Qinhuai River in Nanjing and the historical imagery of the night mooring in the Qinhuai River to build the brand story line and create the brand's cultural ambience and aesthetic emotion (Figure 1). In addition, the brand's cultural narrative should achieve cross-platform consistency in communication, and maintain the unity of visual style and cultural connotation in social media, short videos and other diversified media, so as to enhance the communication effect and cultural penetration.[4]

Figure 1. Qinhuai River (Photo Source: Self-Drawn)

Finally, this chapter elaborates on how local traditional culture can be transformed and applied in visual arts through Nanjing's representative cultural resources - the Ming City Wall and Nanjing Yunjin (Figure 2 and Figure 3)[6], The 'traces of time' in the brick pattern of the Ming City Wall show the design possibilities of 'historical touch', while the Yunjin brocade provides a source of patterns and colour schemes with high aesthetic and cultural connotations. These cultural elements are not only the material base of 'design elements', but also the source carrier of 'brand culture'.
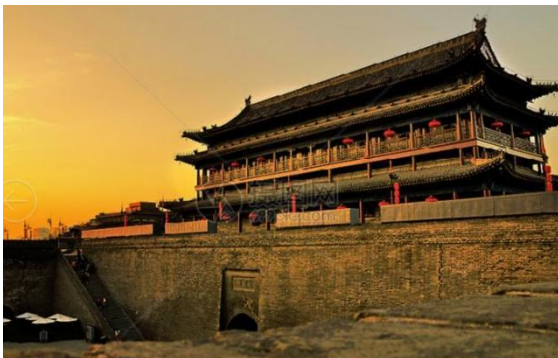

Figure 2. Ming City Wall (Photo Source: Self-Drawn)

Figure 3. Yunjin (Photo Source: Self-Drawn)

In summary, the deep integration of traditional culture and visual communication design not only promotes the contemporary expression and

dissemination of culture[2], but also provides a new cultural fulcrum for brand image construction. When designers carry out brand visual design, they should adhere to the four-stage methodology of 'cultural refinement-visual translation-system construction-narrative expression', and activate the cultural kernel with the help of modern design means on the basis of traditional culture, so as to make the brand both marketable and attractive. On the basis of understanding traditional culture, we should activate the culture with the help of modern design means, so that the brand has both market attraction and cultural depth, and realise the two-way empowerment of cultural value and commercial value. Especially in the construction of the 'Blue Whale' brand, the visual regeneration of Nanjing traditional culture will become a key resource for brand image building, realising the effective transformation from 'cultural materials' to 'brand assets'. Effective transformation from 'cultural materials' to 'brand assets'.

3. Data Collection

3.1 Qualitative Research Methods

This study explores the transformation path and expression mechanism of traditional Nanjing cultural elements in the visual image design of the Blue Whale brand through a variety of qualitative methods. The main methods include:

(1) Literature analysis method: We systematically review Chinese and foreign research literature in the fields of brand design, regional culture and visual communication to establish a theoretical framework and clarify the expression characteristics and evolution logic of cultural visual language.

(2) Cultural element extraction method: taking the regional culture of Nanjing as the core, we extracted representative symbols from Qinhuai lanterns, cloud brocade patterns, texture of city bricks and classified and refined them through their visual characteristics, symbolic meanings, and cultural values, so as to provide cultural support for the brand design.[3]

(3) Case analysis method: select "Tea Face", "Guan Xia" and other cultural brands as the comparison object, and analyse them in terms of visual strategy, cultural narrative, user perception, etc. to extract the most suitable symbols for brand design. We analysed them and extracted the design experience that can be used as a reference

for the "Blue Whale" brand.

(4)Design practice method: Through the actual construction of the visual system of the "Blue Whale" brand, including logo design, colour system, font integration and graphic system development, we verify the adaptability of Nanjing culture in visual expression and innovative strategies, and form a summary of the methodology.

3.2 Quantitative Research Method

In order to verify the audience acceptance and communication effect of the "Blue Whale" visual design, this study adopts a quantitative research method to support the data:

(1) Questionnaire survey: design a structured questionnaire covering brand identification, aesthetics, cultural association and user emotional connection, using Likert scale for quantification, covering design students, young consumers and cultural enthusiasts, the total number of questionnaires issued is 200.

(2) Data analysis: Descriptive and cross-tabulation analyses of the questionnaire data were conducted using Excel to explore the trend of preference for brand visual elements (e.g., colours, fonts, graphics) and the degree of cultural identification among different users.

(3) Optimisation feedback: Combine the quantitative data to identify user understanding barriers or aesthetic deviations in the design, and propose improvement strategies, such as simplifying the "Yunjin graphic" or modernising the fonts.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Design

In order to ensure the representativeness and validity of the data, the following three target groups were selected in the Nanjing area, and diverse sampling methods were used to obtain the samples:

(1) Branding and marketing practitioners (n=3): to provide feedback on brand positioning, audience needs and market perspectives, and to assess the usefulness of brand identity systems.

(2) Design and cultural experts (n=3): including university teachers, independent designers and cultural and creative consultants, to examine the integrity and innovation of cultural translation and visual language from a professional perspective.

(3) Target consumers (n=200): aged 18-35, including university students, young residents and tourists, randomly sampled through online questionnaires and offline interviews to ensure the

breadth of the data and the validity of the cultural acceptance assessment.

The sites selected for the research focused on cultural landmarks such as Nanjing Fuzimiao, Laomendong, Xinjiekou, etc., which, together with field observations and in-depth interviews, constitute a multi-dimensional data system that truly reflects users' perceptions.[7]

4. Conclusion

This study takes the "Blue Whale" brand as a case study to explore the value and practice path of Nanjing traditional culture in brand visual design. The study shows that:

1.Culture empowers brand recognition: Nanjing's rich historical and cultural resources provide distinctive visual symbols for the brand, effectively enhancing the brand's cultural depth and regional recognition.

2.Visual expression needs to balance aesthetics and communication: modern translation of traditional culture in terms of graphics, colours and fonts helps to enhance the aesthetic consistency and user acceptance of the brand.

3.Cultural design enhances users' emotional connection: a systematic design that incorporates cultural narratives and visual scenarios can stimulate users' cultural identity and brand goodwill, and enhance brand communication power.

This study builds a design path of cultural refinement-visual translation-integrated application, which provides practical reference and theoretical support for local brands to integrate regional culture and visual communication.

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