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Research on Packaging Design and Brand Visual Strategy of Cultural and Creative Products: A Case Study of the Palace Museum's Cultural and Creative Products

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Abstract:

Against the backdrop of the rapid development of the cultural and creative industry, this study focuses on the interactive relationship between the packaging design of cultural and creative products and brand strategies. Taking the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products as a case study, it analyzes the connection between packaging design and brand visual strategy, revealing their mutual influence. Besides, this study mainly relies on the official website of the Palace Museum and relevant literature to analyze the specific manifestations of its design practices and brand development. The results demonstrate that, in order to further enhance the artistic expression and cultural content of packaging design for cultural and creative products, and to establish a personalized brand visual identity, accurate brand positioning must be carried out first. Based on this, relevant design elements should be gathered, with a focus on visual value, to endow the brand with artistic independence, achieving effective brand communication and independent visual extension. Moreover, continuous management and innovation of design imagery should be fully implemented to ensure sustained, theme-based output.

Keywords: Cultural creativity; packaging design; brand strategy; brand communication; brand management

1. Introduction

In recent years, the cultural and creative industry has grown rapidly worldwide, becoming a key driver of cultural exchange and economic growth [1]. These products transform cultural resources into consumer goods while also bridging tradition and modernity, as well as art and the market [2]. In this context, packaging design plays a central role, serving both functional purposes and being crucial for cultural ex-

pression and brand image development. Existing studies mostly emphasize the functional or aesthetic qualities of packaging, or the visual depiction of cultural elements. However, they usually overlook the link between packaging design and brand visual strategies, especially in applied research using typical case studies [3]. Therefore, this paper examines the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products, using literature analysis and case studies to explore packaging design from three perspectives: functionality, cultural attributes, and strategic value. In addition, it seeks to reveal the balance that packaging design of cultural products must strike between functionality and cultural connotation, while interpreting traditional cultural elements via modern design language to give the brand a unique visual identity. By conveying cultural information, packaging also plays a key role in establishing brand identity. Through these observations, this paper aims to offer insights for market-oriented design of cultural and creative products while preserving their cultural traits. The success of design lies in combining aesthetics, functionality, and brand strategies with visual elements, while innovation and themed output enhance market recognition and brand independence.

2. The Packaging and Brand Visual Identity in Cultural and Creative Products

2.1 Characteristics and Functions of Packaging Design

Packaging design bridges products and consumers, integrating functionality, cultural attributes, and aesthetic expression. Functionality includes product protection, information delivery, and usage guidance [4]. Protection keeps products intact during transport and use; portability ensures ease of carrying via thoughtful design and materials; and resource recycling reflects sustainability. Besides, the packaging of cultural and creative products conveys cultural spirit and artistic meaning through patterns, text, and overall visual design [5]. Aesthetics and cultural attributes are both essential in the packaging of cultural and creative products. By extracting and adapting cultural relics and elements, designers integrate the artistic characteristics of history into modern design, allowing the packaging to meet functional needs while also presenting visual aesthetics. The visual language not only conveys cultural information but also allows consumers to perceive the cultural value behind the design during use, making the packaging an artistic and cultural carrier of the product.

2.2 Cultural Elements and Visual Presentation

Cultural elements are central to the packaging of cultural and creative products, as they enable brands to form an emotional connection with consumers [6]. Visual presentation transforms cultural connotations into recognizable design language, allowing packaging to fulfill its basic functions of protection and communication while also promoting cultural dissemination and brand building. In the design of cultural and creative products, two key characteristics often emerge: abstraction and connectivity. And abstraction is reflected in the designers' extraction and artistic interpretation of cultural relics and elements. By recombining colors, patterns, materials, or techniques, the historical artistic features are extended into modern packaging [7]. On the other hand, connectivity highlights the relationship between the product and cultural relics, history, and culture. It establishes a deep bond through visual language, allowing users to connect with the cultural heritage while interacting with the product [8]. This approach allows packaging to carry historical memories, convey cultural spirit, and give the brand a unique artistic identity and recognizability.

2.3 Brand Visual Strategy and Methods

Brand visual strategy determines how a company's philosophy, product design, and service spirit are conveyed to consumers through visual means. In this context, packaging serves as a protective tool and a carrier of brand identity. Specifically, logos, standard colors, standard fonts,

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and auxiliary graphics are the core elements. [9]. Logos carry the core philosophy of a brand and act as the key to identification, while colors and fonts create a unified style and convey brand information. Besides, auxiliary graphics enrich the visual hierarchy and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the overall design. A successful strategy depends on the refinement and visual transformation of core information, integrating brand culture, product characteristics, and design concepts into packaging design [10]. Furthermore, visual strategies directly impact the user experience. Elements such as the packaging's appearance, unboxing method, usage process, and secondary utilization design all shape consumers' perceptions. Appropriate visual design turns packaging into a communication medium between the brand and users, enhancing a sense of engagement, brand awareness, and loyalty. Thus, packaging not only serves product functions but also undertakes the transmission of cultural and brand values.

3. The Practices of Packaging Design for Palace Museum Cultural and Creative Products

3.1 Design Functions and User Experience

The key indicators for judging whether packaging meets standards are design functionality and user experience [11]. High-quality design functionality ensures product safety during transportation and sales while also enhancing user comfort during use. When functional design is combined with artistic creativity, it becomes a key element in elevating the overall user experience. For instance, the packaging of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative product, Filial Piety Empress Phoenix Diadem 3D Refrigerator Magnet, uses a purple-blue rigid paper shell with black sponge padding, and features product information and design patterns on the front. The overall packaging design fully reflects the seamless integration of functionality and user experience. As shown in Figure 1, its packaging not only protects the product and facilitates transportation but also conveys cultural and artistic information.

Figure 1. Outer Packaging of the 3D Refrigerator Magnet in the Shape of Empress Xiaojing's Phoenix Diadem

In terms of design functionality, the packaging incorporates protection, portability, sustainability, and cultural heritage [12]. The flat rectangular box is filled with black sponge, which protects the product during transport and storage. And the grooves in the sponge secure the product in place, preventing deformation. Made from lightweight recycled paper, the box reduces weight and saves space, while promoting resource recycling. In terms of information communication, promotional patterns are printed on the front of the packaging, showcasing the creative style and artistic features of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products. From the perspective of user experience, the packaging design fully considers the unboxing, operation, visual, and tactile experiences. The color scheme of purple, blue, and yellow is inspired by the Qing Dynasty imperial style of "bright yellow and dark purple," lending the design a grand, premium feel. The front pattern showcases the product, complemented by auspicious cloud and treasure motifs, creating a clean yet visually rich effect.

3.2 Cultural Symbols and Visual Application

The success of the Palace Museum's cultural products lies in its deep exploration and modern take on its culture. By transforming the themes and artistic features of cultur-

al relics into symbols and visual elements for everyday items, it imparts a distinctive cultural identity to the products and packaging, establishing a strong cultural bond [13]. This approach leverages the Palace Museum's rich cultural relics while opening new cultural and commercial avenues. For instance, the packaging of the One Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains teacup features a minimalist design. The outer box is in lapis lazuli blue, inspired by the painting, with the cover showcasing a fragment of the artwork, free from text, preserving its artistic integrity, as shown in Figure 2. The designer printed the painting on two-thirds of the vertical surfaces of the box. By combining different surfaces, a visual effect is created where "it appears as a mountain range when viewed from the front, and as a peak when viewed from the side," making the painting the central cultural element of the packaging.

Figure 2. Outer Packaging of the One Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains Teacup

In addition, the packaging of the Inlaid with Flowers pocket mirror conveys cultural expression through the extraction and adaptation of elements, as shown in Figure 3. Aimed at female users, the designer drew key patterns from the bronze mirror featuring "sparrow-perching-on-flower-branch" motifs and incorporated fish-circling, lotus, and peach branch patterns into both the packaging and product design. The pink-and-white rigid paper box presents the front of the product, framed by brass-colored imitation patterns along the edges. And the inner pouch, a white cloth bag with subtle patterns, complements the packaging and product design, enhancing the overall texture. Through the extraction, integration, and adaptation of cultural relic elements, the packaging conveys cultural meaning while maintaining visual appeal.

Figure 3: Outer Packaging of the Inlaid with Flowers Pocket Mirror

Thus, it can be observed that the packaging design of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products follows a certain pattern. The color selection is based on the characteristics of the products, ensuring that the packaging complements its overall style [14]. Besides, pattern design emphasizes the product's features, with auxiliary patterns used to complement the main design. For example, the One Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains teacup adopts a minimalist design without auxiliary patterns; the Inlaid with Flowers pocket mirror features lotus patterns, and the phoenix diadem refrigerator magnet incorporates bat patterns. In terms of materials, most products use lightweight, rigid paper shells for outer packaging, with inner linings selected based on product characteristics. For instance, the phoenix diadem refrigerator magnet uses black sponge for safe transport and a touch of sophistication. This reveals two main methods to applying cultural symbols in the Palace Museum's product packaging: one is the direct adoption of artistic elements from cultural relics, and the other is the extraction and adaptation of cultural elements based on the product's features [15]. Both approaches enhance the packaging with cultural recognition and artistic appeal

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while improving visual impact and product characteristics.

3.3 Innovative Design Methods and Strategies

In the packaging design of its cultural and creative products, the Palace Museum continuously enhances product experience and market value through innovative concepts and a user-centric approach. Interactive design emphasizes users' sense of participation and psychological experience, focusing not only on the fun of unboxing but also on the sense of ritual in the operation process. For instance, the Mid-Autumn Festival mooncake gift box adopts a layered opening and inner lining design, enabling consumers to form an emotional connection during the process of opening it. This multi-step unboxing experience strengthens users' identification with the brand and highlights the practical value of design and user experience theories in cultural and creative products. Additionally, cross-border cooperation represents another key aspect of the innovation strategy. The Palace Museum Bottle premium mineral water, a collaboration between the Palace Museum and Nongfu Spring, integrates nine paintings from the Palace Museum's collection, including Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains and One Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains, transforming the bottle into a portable cultural and artistic artifact. Such a design not only expands the audience base but also extends cultural symbols to different consumption scenarios, realizing the integration of cultural translation and brand equity. In terms of user research and optimization, the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products rely on feedback from e-commerce platforms and interactions on social media to continuously adjust packaging designs, forming a user-centered design loop. This approach ensures that design decisions are not only aligned with market demands but also balance cultural expression and product aesthetics, guaranteeing that products meet user expectations in terms of visuals, functionality, and experience.

4. Brand Visual Strategy and Design Methods for Cultural and Creative Products

4.1 Brand Positioning and Visual Value

The brand positioning of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products is rooted in the 600-year cultural heritage of the Forbidden City, achieving the modern dissemination of traditional culture through these products [16]. This positioning not only emphasizes cultural authority and a sense of history but also focuses on integration with consumer experience. The design and visual expression of each product are consistent with the core brand values, allowing users to understand and engage with cultural connotations through visual perception.In terms of constructing the brand visual system, the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products systematically apply elements such as logos, standard colors, standard fonts, and auxiliary graphics across multiple channels, including online malls, official apps, and social media. The logo displays the Chinese characters for Palace Museum in a traditional calligraphic font, conveying solemnity and historical significance. The standard colors, Palace Museum Red, gold, and Glazed Yellow, reinforce cultural symbolism. Auxiliary graphics, inspired by patterns from the museum's cultural relics, visually enhance the artistic appeal and cultural identity.

4.2 Brand Communication and Visual Extension

The brand communication strategy of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products is based on a unified visual system, ensuring consistency and high recognition across all touchpoints [17]. The VIS (Visual Identity System) is not only applied to product packaging but also extended to online malls, official apps, social media platforms such as WeChat, Weibo, and TikTok, as well as various promotional materials. Through a consistent visual style, consumers can perceive the brand's cultural connotations across different scenarios, while enhancing emotional connection and recognition. The unified visual symbols also improve communication efficiency, allowing

the brand image to naturally penetrate user interactions and spontaneous dissemination. For visual extension, the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products reach new audiences through cross-border collaboration and IP expansion. For instance, in co-branded exhibitions, limited-edition products at experience stores, and online interactive activities, the brand's visual elements are integrated into new contexts and diverse product categories. This approach not only ensures visual consistency but also broadens social influence and market reach. By extending visual elements across different media and consumption scenarios, the brand can consolidate the cognition of core audiences while attracting potential users, achieving the dual enhancement of cultural communication and market value [18].

4.3 Image Management and Design Innovation

The Palace Museum's cultural and creative products maintain consistency in style, cultural expression, and visual aesthetics across all derivatives and brand content through a systematic brand image management system [19]. Strict design reviews and a unified visual tone standardize the design process, ensuring the brand's high recognizability across various media and channels, and allowing consumers to develop a stable and consistent brand perception. Strict design review and unified visual tone standardize the design process, ensuring the brand maintains high recognizability across different media and channels, and enabling consumers to form a stable and consistent perception of the brand. In terms of design innovation, the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products rely on a user feedback-driven mechanism. They collect opinions through social media interactions, online voting, and market research, integrate data analysis into design decisions, and achieve closed-loop management. User feedback helps the brand promptly adjust its visual presentation and communication strategies, making products more aligned with market demands while preserving cultural connotations and artistic value. This user-centric innovation approach not only enhances the effectiveness of brand asset management but provides a practical path for cultural inheritance. The continuously optimized visual strategy strengthens consumers' brand recognition and cultural awareness, ensuring that every design innovation serves to elevate the overall value of the brand.

5. Conclusion

This study indicates that the packaging design of cultural and creative products has achieved a high degree of integration among functionality, cultural attribute, aesthetic value, and brand strategy. Through the modern translation of traditional cultural elements and a systematic visual strategy, it not only strengthens brand recognition and user experience but also successfully transforms cultural resources into products with market value. For example, the minimalist packaging of the One Thousand Li of Rivers and Mountains teacup preserves the original colors and partial patterns of the painting; the Inlaid with Flowers pocket mirror achieves a modern presentation through adapted colors and patterns; and the Phoenix Diadem Refrigerator Magnet (inspired by Empress Xiaojing) combines a rigid paper box with a sponge inner lining, balancing protection with a premium texture. These design practices indicate that, despite differences in color, pattern, material, craftsmanship, and unboxing experience, all products reflect the seamless integration of cultural heritage and modern design, offering practical references for the packaging innovation of cultural IP. This study still has limitations, such as the limited coverage of cases, insufficient quantitative analysis, and a single research perspective. In the future, by expanding the scope to cover the entire product line, increasing quantitative empirical studies, conducting cross-IP comparisons, integrating new media, and incorporating cutting-edge design trends, the theoretical framework and methodology system can be further improved. This will provide referable practical experience and methodological guidance for the packaging innovation of cultural IP, the optimization of brand visual strategies, and the dissemination of cultural value.

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