Scientific Research Publishing

Research on the Construction Strategy of Visual Image Design at the Brand Aging Stage

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Abstract

Purpose: Through the analysis of the characteristics and the relationship between the visual image and the brand in brand aging stage, the designer can realize significant value and master coping strategy of visual image design in this stage. **Method:** The brand's needs of the aging stage in brand life cycle development are analyzed. The cognitive processes of restoration and reconstruction between the relationship of customs and the brand are studied, then we concluded the primary task and demand need to be solved in this stage. Moreover, how to enhance the brand's value via element optimization and reorganization is achieved by comparing and analyzing the problems in visual image design in which Chinese brands under the aging stage exist. Finally, the strategy for connection repairing and strengthening between customs and the brand can be re-established. **Conclusion:** Brand visual image, which is the outer symbol of a brand, can express the abstract value of the brand and deliver intrinsic value effectively. Therefore, visual symbol element modification can rejuvenate the "old" brand. Meanwhile, cross-border integration of visual elements in multiple fields can greatly deepen and broaden the brand value effect.

Keywords

Brand, Aging Stage, Visual Image Design, Strategy

1. Introduction

Due to international market integration and intensifying competition between brands, some brands in China (such as Jianlibao, Li Ning, Lenovo, etc.) have experienced the phenomenon of "brand aging" (brand aging stage: on the one hand, a long-term fixed value cognition is formed; on the other hand, the brand

value has not increased, and continues to show a downward trend) during their development process. Although the overall development of Chinese brands remains in the early stages when viewed from the perspective of development history, factors including the impact of intensified brand competition and changes in audience groups have led to the appearance of the phenomenon of the "early aging" of brands (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). As this phenomenon emerges, some domestic brands have become confused, resulting in them changing visual symbols at will, frequently changing their visual design systems, and even plagiarism and other undesirable phenomena. it is an inevitable brand development process.

As the external expression of the brand, the brand visual image design is the bridge of information communication between the brand and the audience (Henderson et al., 2003). It is often used as an intermediate channel of communication to convey new brand concepts、 new values and strategic intentions to the society. To "repair the relationship" with the audience and reshape the value effect, the visual image design requires changes at this stage in order to better promote the value adjustment during the aging stage of the brand.

2. To Change the Design Elements of Brand Visual Image and Promote the Reconstruction of Brand Value

For brands in the aging stage, the brand asset is shrinking due to the decline of brand competitiveness. At this time, new elements and changes need to be combined, in order to effectively promote the brand value, and to realize the promotion of their own influence (Kim, 2004).

1) Develop a "new" visual design system

Brand visual image design is dependent on benign communication between brand and audience, and it plays its corresponding role and value. If one or both parties no longer have "value", the intermediate transmission link will end. Different emergencies are encountered during brand development. The occurrence of a special situation can have different degrees of impact on a brand (sometimes it may even be a positive effect), but some brands will repeatedly encounter negative situations. The continued loss of value of resources in the market will lead to a continued decline in competitiveness in the market, ultimately forming quite a passive situation. At this time, the brand must cut or divest some products as a means of preventing weak products affecting the optimal combination of product lines and to reduce the development process of new products with fixed capital investment (Kim, 2010). At this time, the brand visual image design system should also implement the same plan. The design system architecture should be optimized on the premise of clearing the product line, and certain elements that also have "value influence" should be retained. It can look for opportunities to integrate itself in the development of the "new" system while also providing reference and guidance for the development of the "new" system.

However, the large-scale replacement of the visual image design system will

have a significant impact on the brand, and a new round of information transmission and channel construction should be conducted on the premise of requiring financial support. Therefore, most brands will not completely eliminate the original visual image design system. As an important part of brand equity, visual identity design must be constantly maintained rather than being reinvented (van Riel & van den Ban, 2001).

In recent years, some Chinese enterprises have some wrong perceptions of "new" visual design, believing that logo upgrading needs to replace all the old elements, rather than partial modifications. For some brands, this change splits the relationship between old and new, which results in a total breakdown of information transmission and connection. When they see a new logo and a new visual image, the audience appears convinced that it is a new brand, which results in a negative cognitive effect (Creusen et al., 2021). For example, the auto industry in China, particularly in terms of the development of family car brands, has encountered a similar dilemma. Most domestic car brands neglected to focus on the visual image design of their brand initially, leading to their original image not meeting the needs of subsequent development at a later stage. When planning element change, there is no clear plan for "new" design system development, but the practice of total abandonment of old elements is generally adopted. Brand equity that has been accumulated through the years has been wasted in an automobile industry that emphasizes history and accumulation. However, the development of the "new" design system often fails to highlight the characteristics of the brand. Some brands have used random and rough logo designs that are similar to those of other companies, including those of Changan and Acura, Chery and Infiniti, and Bentley and Chery.

The new visual image design system is called "new" because it partially optimizes the visual image, which can make the audience have a fresh visual experience. However, if the change is large, it will lead to a break between the previous vision and the current vision of the brand, which will consume the continuous accumulation of brand value (So, 2009). Therefore, the emergence of new elements must reflect a certain amount of relevance in form for better realizing the transmission and accumulation of value. This requires that the visual system should create with the core value symbol of the brand as the central point to form a continuous accumulation of brand assets.

For example, Burberry, a famous royal brand, implemented a series of marketing strategies to activate some consumer groups, improve market share and brand influence. Among them, the brand vision (Wakefield et al., 2008), as an important part of brand equity, has been adjusted. To better shape the original noble, refined, and professional high-end image of the brand, and to facilitate its promotion to a younger and more fashionable class group, Burberry conducted a bold new development of its visual image design system. Firstly, the graphics of the logo were simplified and the combination of equestrian knight graphics and serif fonts that had been used in the logo since 1901 were removed, before a

more concise sans-serif font was used as the logo. "London England" was retained and the new logo was presented in the Bodoni font the brand has used since 1901. Secondly, in the design of the exclusive application symbol, to maintain the development of the trend and to gain the recognition of more young groups, the initials of brand founder, Thomas Burberry, were used to create a new interwoven pattern. Burberry has optimized the original vision, and the new visual symbols designed have developed into a new product system. It not only enhances the original brand value, but also adds new brand symbols, which has formed a richer symbolic connotation and group coverage (Walsh et al., 2010).

For a brand that has a long history, there is a certain amount of risk with large-scale element changes, and a little carelessness can have a significant impact. As the visual image of the brand has become a part of its fixed symbol cognition in the circulation of information, if the conversion process between "new" and "old" elements is not well connected, there could be negative consequences as a result.

2) Optimize the original visual image design system

Not all "new" element development is successful, and for every success story, there is also an example of failure. Each "new" element development requires a certain amount of preliminary preparation, a certain amount of good promotion at the later stage, and the avoidance and control of emergencies, which is the sum of opportunities and risks. For some brands at the aging stage, they may not dare to change the original visual image design system rashly (Nie, 2015), fearing that the audience will be less accepting and the running-in time will be longer under the promotion of "new" elements, thereby giving their competitors an advantage and market share could be lost. Therefore, continuous and slight optimization of the original visual elements can minimize the "discomfort and sense of difference" in the audience's cognition, laying the foundation for the use and promotion of the target graphics in the later stage. At the same time, with the promotion of the brand's new marketing strategy, it plays a role in attracting audience attention and information promotion (Philip & Kevin, 2018). Among the top 500 brands in the world, many choose to optimize the original visual image design system when changing the elements. For example, the adjustment of LG's main graphics did not change greatly, but lengthened and simplified the font. Although the change of LG's brand identity is very small, it uses this "news" to convey the information of the new strategic change of the enterprise, and also gives the audience a spirit of continuous innovation. As customers are bombarded with an ever-increasing amount of brand promotion and advertising information, brand operation mode is also changing and traffic has become a key factor, particularly for some brands with strong Internet characteristics. The optimization of visual elements and taking the opportunity to attract attention and convey strategic information have become part of the strategy with some brand image upgrades. However, the rationale for element optimization must not be ignored (Nishina et al., 2008).

3. To Improve the Internal Power of the Brand by Expanding the Visual Elements of the Brand

According to the different characteristics and development needs of a brand, its internal organizational structure will change in varying degrees in order to adapt to the current context, and the depth and breadth of this change is the basis for establishing a relationship with the audience. At the stage of brand aging, the expansion of elements can often become the main method of cultural supplementation and field expansion. Through the continuous promotion of the diversification of elements, the value-added effect of the brand will be enhanced. The brand aging stage is one of revision and reorganization. To better satisfy audience needs and cater to current cultural trends, it will sometimes be necessary to enhance and expand brand connotation so it covers more groups with needs that are richer and more diverse. In this situation (Deng, 2015), the brand visual image design must also expand the relevant elements as a means of increasing the value conversion and better driving the reshaping of brand competitiveness at the aging stage.

1) Multi-field exploration of brand visual image design system

Brand visual elements are unique. In the long-term process of element recognition, the audience has established a series of cognitive boundaries. Through these visual elements, we can see the image, emotion, connotation and personality characteristics of the brand. The multi field exploration of brand visual elements can broaden and deepen the original symbolic value with the help of other value elements.

Brand development is a continuous process of accumulation, and the existing image will be achieved gradually by the long-term comprehensive influence of culture, society, and user groups (Huang, 2017). However, for the brand, "sticking to the original intention" is the fundamental element for its long-term development, but on the developmental journey, corresponding repairs must be made based on the development needs of different periods to ensure the brand "moves with the times" and integrates better into market environment development. Therefore, the multi-domain expansion of certain elements must also constantly be repaired in order to achieve better results. For many brands, multi-field exploration has now become one of the important means of increasing its deep interaction with the audience, broadening brand connotations, and enhancing the image of its rejuvenation. Although they all emphasize the applicability of elements, the multi-domain exploration is based more on the level of interaction (Heath, 2010), and its actual sales purpose is quite weak. In addition, if the influence of the elements in the visual image design of the brand is weak, then the actual effect of subsequent crossovers will be incredibly low.

Generally, the multi-field exploration of elements in the resonance of brand visual image design utilizes logos or core graphics as its main visual symbol objects, combining brand characteristics, strategic purposes, culture, groups, and other factors as a means of breaking the normalized field of brand cognition.

Related categories or even irrelevant categories are graphically combined, the matching of "form" is used to drive the integration of "meaning" for both parties. Coca-Cola, a century-old brand, uses red and arc elements to expand on its concept of "sharing happiness", in order to better integrate into the trend of the times and gain recognition from the audience. The combination of popular culture and fashion elements has aroused the attention and love of the audience, and continues to enrich the brand connotation. It can be seen that the exploration of Coca-Cola elements has been hugely successful in many fields, including soda-flavored lipstick that was jointly launched with the Lip Smacker brand, the make-up series produced in cooperation with The Face Shop, and the limited-edition nail polish that was co-branded with OPI. In addition, there are many different types of products, including perfumes, books, and drinking glasses, all of which are explorations into a wide variety of different fields. Although the extension span of the elements is quite large, they are all closely related to the concept of "creating happiness". The fusion of symbolic elements drives the formation of the broad concept of "happiness" through fashion and trends, and the brand uses this as a means of reinforcing its unique symbolic imprint (Porter, 2005).

2) The increase of multiple elements of the brand visual design system

To satisfy the dual needs of information dissemination and brand connotation, applications with logos as the main body are often used. Due to the strong "solidified" symbolic nature of the logo, the audience is able to form a stable impression in the long-term information reception. This enables the brand to continue enriching its own connotation, shorten the emotional distance between itself and the audience, and highlight the exclusiveness of brand symbols and the uniqueness of image cognition. Therefore, the addition of elements to the logo graphics as a means of expanding the internal meaning and external image of the brand has become the primary element expansion method in visual image design. Whether it is the multi-field exploration of elements or the addition of multi-elements, the purpose is forming cognitive changes that are guided by symbolic elements and producing better value information effects. Therefore, the three factors that must be considered are still inseparable from the brand, the audience group, and competitors of the brand, but during the consideration process, different proportions will be implemented for specific situations. For example, as multiple elements increase in the visual image design of a strong brand at the aging stage, its own symbolism already has strong appeal and influence. Competitors are less threatening, and the proportion of consideration for this factor can then be reduced, and more attention paid to the audience factor, with particular focus on the level of audience communication, increasing audience demand elements as much as possible, and changing the variation range of the glyph elements more freely (Li, 2016).

As the most valuable brand for many consecutive years, Apple is committed to integrating technological innovation into the lives of people. Following the

success of multiple products, the brand has gained an increasingly widespread influence. However, in recent years, the advantage Apple has long enjoyed in product innovation has started to fade. The rise of rival brands including Samsung and Hua wei has had a significant impact on Apple and in recent years, the gap between the products of Apple and those of its rivals has become smaller. To maintain continuous competitiveness, convey the high-tech image of its continuous innovation and position as a trend-leader to the audience, and generate more in-depth audience interaction and communication, Apple has started a series of brand adjustment activities. The "new" Apple logo was displayed during a new product launch event at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York on October 30th, 2018. The artist created 371 graphic works, and audiences were able to see "different apples" for up to a year. At the same time, an invitation letter stating "There's more in the making" (more new products in the pipeline) hinted that more products would be launched, making it a perfect fit with the multi-graphic display.

4. Conclusion

As the primary object of this article, the aging stage of brand development was studied and the strategies were proposed by analyzing reason and significance for element changes in visual image design. Firstly, regarding driving brand value reconstruction, developing a new visual image design system and optimizing the visual image design system were proposed. Secondly, regarding extending the internal impetus of the brand, exploring the multi-element range and increasing symbol elements were proposed. The development of a brand is a continuous process of value optimization and adjustment. As an information bridge that connects brand and customs, visual image design requires closer integration so that it can facilitate information transfer effectively. This construction strategy requires both artistic "beautification" attraction and scientific "logic" support to effectively and continuously promote brand value and competitiveness.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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