

# A Study on the Mechanism of User Aesthetic Experience of China Chic Visual Aesthetics

Meijun Lu<sup>1</sup>, Yichuan Di<sup>2\*</sup>, Zichao Nie<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of Art and Design, Taylor's University, Selangor, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>School of New Media Art and Design, Beihang University, Beijing, China

Email: \*myra1009@163.com

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## Abstract

This paper aims to construct a framework of China Chic visual aesthetics based on users' aesthetic experience to accurately understand users' aesthetic needs and experience of China Chic cultural products. First, the definition and theoretical framework of China Chic visual aesthetics are sorted out, and then the process and mechanism of users' aesthetic experience are analysed through relevant literature. Finally, we summarise the intrinsic correlation between China Chic visual aesthetics and users' aesthetic experience and refine the spiritual connotation of China Chic visual aesthetics to more accurately excavate and satisfy users' perceived needs for aesthetic experience. This study proposes a framework of China Chic visual aesthetics based on users' aesthetic experience. The framework aims to guide customers to personalized self-interpretation when viewing and touching China Chic products by displaying morphological attributes and creating spatial context to realize a comprehensive aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics. The framework provides the foundation and theoretical support for advancing China Chic visual design and establishing the theoretical system of post-modern Chinese oriental aesthetics. Meanwhile, the framework helps improve users' satisfaction and experience perception of China Chic visual aesthetics, thus promoting the development and dissemination of China Chic design.

## Keywords

China Chic, Visual Aesthetics, User Aesthetic Experience, Design Framework

## 1. Introduction

China Chic is not only a trend of national products, but also a trend of national power and post-modern Chinese design aesthetics. China Chic has gradually

evolved from consumer behaviour to a dominant cultural phenomenon, from physical products to cultural creativity, and has become an iconic core that has inspired the modernisation and transformation of Chinese culture and artistic forms. China Chic phenomenon is a fashion communication phenomenon, but it is essentially a phenomenon of cultural creativity empowering traditional industries. Cultural creativity empowers traditional industries, and the deep-seated reason is based on the autonomy brought about by the rise of national power, anti-international trends, and the formation of self-cultural consciousness under the condition of globalisation. Thus, the importance of the construction and future development of China Chic visual design and aesthetics is self-evident, and how to make customers have the correct aesthetic perception and aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics is an issue worth studying. Therefore, this study aims to construct a framework for user aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics under the perspective of experience design. It analyses how to construct customers' aesthetic experiences of China Chic visual aesthetics and explores their aesthetic perception and emotional needs. Through the display of the morphological attributes of China Chic products and the creation of spatial context, the framework guides customers to personalised self-interpretation when viewing and touching China Chic products, thus realising a comprehensive aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics. It helps designers, brands, and retailers to better understand the needs of customers and provide a more attractive and personalised China Chic design and shopping experience. In this way, we can more accurately and effectively satisfy the customer experience, market demand, and China Chic culture dissemination to enhance the spiritual connotation of China Chic design and strengthen its plasticity and comprehensive dissemination simultaneously.

## **2. China Chic Visual Design and Aesthetics**

### **2.1. Overview of the Current Situation of China Chic visual Design**

2018 has been called “the first year of China Chic”, and the main categories have a strong Chinese trend (Zhu, 2021). Behind the emergence of traditional Chinese cultural elements as “fashion” and “trend,” it is influenced by economic and social development and reflects the awakening of local cultural awareness and recognition of cultural values. This paper argues that “China Chic” is a phenomenon of cultural and economic interaction, which is expressed through the combination of tradition and modernity, culture and technology, local and international, and through the visualisation of consumer mentality, and that its cognitive structure is based on the category of meaning based on cultural identity.

With the rising trend of China Chic, the public is increasingly feeling the embodiment of traditional elements through modern design expressions on a visual level. Hu Lei, the founder of One Brand, believes that “China Chic vision” has become the core competence of products and brands. We can only grasp the trend of consumers' aesthetic demand by understanding the relationship be-

tween vision and brand (NetEase, 2022). Therefore, national brands often incorporate traditional Chinese culture into their visual design, integrating Chinese aesthetics invisibly into people's daily life and expressing China Chic style (Shen, Mu & Wan, 2020). China Chic visual design applies the characteristics of "China Chic" brands in terms of the external expression and internal organisational structure of traditional ornaments, stylistic intent, colouring methods, traditional craftsmanship, and the application of natural materials (Kong, Wang & Li, 2021). The characteristics of "China Chic" were applied to the design of the China Chic brand. According to Li Rongrong, the visual design of China Chic has one of the following characteristics: the use of fonts with a Chinese flavour, graphic refinement highlighting the origin of the literary lineage, and the display of colours that convey the presentation of traditional aesthetics (Li, 2021). China Chic visual design is a unique form of design expression with strong use of colour retro, symbols of traditional cultural elements, and sophisticated and interesting design style (Li, Liu & Lu, 2020). Wu Wei deconstructs and analyses the video advertisement of the Li Ning brand from the three dimensions of Chris's visual grammar, reproduction, and interaction. He focuses on the expression of conceptual reproduction in the case, mainly in the division of traditional and modern Chinese culture into categories, and conveys Chinese cultural elements through parenthetical expression, as well as the presentation of the core elements in the foreground and in the centre of the screen. Ou Xinju et al. deconstructed the design elements of "New China Chic" in terms of fonts, symbols, and colours. Their results show that in the unconscious attention stage, the calligraphic font, colour gradient, high-purity colour, and non-symbol can attract higher attention; while in the conscious attention stage, the audience pays more attention to the Song font, colour gradient, high-purity colour, and symbol (Ou et al., 2022).

In summary, the visual presentation of "China Chic" from the perspective of visual design can be interpreted from several aspects, such as culture, business, society and art aesthetics. It is believed that China Chic visual design generally has the following artistic characteristics: distinctive ethnic art, deconstruction of traditional elements, consumer-oriented commercial art, popular art leading the public, individuality art advocating crossover, and modern aesthetics of visual art.

## **2.2. Definition of China Chic Visual Aesthetics and Existing Problem Statement**

### **2.2.1. Definition of China Chic Visual Aesthetics**

Visual aesthetics has been shown to significantly impact various constructs, such as perceived usability, satisfaction, and pleasure. It is worth noting that the words "aesthetics" and "audience" share a common etymology. The word "aesthetics" derives from *aisthetikos* and *aisthansthai*, both of which are derived from the Proto-Indo-European (PIE) root "au." The word "audience" also comes from the same root. This common etymology implies that the audience is the

basis of perception and experience. The viewer is like a “mirror image” of the aesthetic experience and needs to be fully visible to each other. Therefore, visual aesthetics is a kind of perception and feeling of external things, which is both dependent on form and transcends form and is able to show the ideological and aesthetic value of cultural visual images (Gao, 2019). While China Chic visual design and China Chic visual aesthetics are complementary concepts. China Chic visual design is the actual design process that focuses on the style, form, and expression of the creative work. China Chic visual aesthetics is a summary and abstraction of the aesthetic concepts and values behind this design process. Overall, China Chic visual design is the concrete practice of China Chic visual aesthetics, while China Chic visual aesthetics provides the theoretical foundation and aesthetic orientation for China Chic visual design. They together promote the modern development and dissemination of traditional Chinese culture, reflecting Chinese designers’ innovation in traditional culture and the pursuit of contemporary aesthetics.

From the perspective of the period since industrialisation to compare Chinese and Western fashion culture and review national traditional culture, we need to rethink the basic theoretical framework defined on the basis of Western design aesthetic research. The purpose of doing so is to broaden the way of thinking about oriental design aesthetics to construct our own school of oriental aesthetic design theory. When Western design dominates fashion trends nowadays, China Chic visual aesthetics must find a way to express the spirit of Oriental aesthetics and become a vehicle for the formal expression of modern design. However, there is no standard answer to aesthetics; it is a philosophy that can also evolve into people’s attitudes towards life, which needs to be constructed through people’s experiences and perceptions (Wang, 2020).

Therefore, China Chic visual aesthetics should be understood as a modern lifestyle rooted in national cultural traditions and adapted to fashion trends [Design Application of Yuan Dynasty Celadon Porcelain in China Chic Packaging under Semiotics Perspective] (Zhang & Tu, 2021). China Chic visual design aesthetics must be based on international fashion trends, be committed to the continuation of cultural genes, and explore the uniqueness of oriental design aesthetics based on inheriting nationalised expression. It evolves the abstract concept of aesthetic spirit into a new trend of modern design, tells the design story belonging to China in the language of modern design, and expresses the contemporary Chinese lifestyle (Zhang & Li, 2023).

### **2.2.2. Existing Problem Statement of China Chic Visual Aesthetics**

Under the influence of globalisation and the Internet, the differences between countries around the world in terms of life and consumption are gradually shrinking (Holt et al., 2004). Consumers prefer a consistent global standard culture and are willing to accept and understand diversity (Steenkamp & De Jong, 2010). The spread of China Chic design has brought new strategic thinking to companies. However, in the context of profit-driven and commercial operations,

there are some problems, such as blind grafting of heterogeneous cultural symbols, following and ignoring users' aesthetic experience. However, these problems must be addressed.

### **1) Blind grafting of heterogeneous cultural symbols**

Wang Ning's analysis highlights a prospective trend wherein the assimilation and interaction of diverse cultural essences will be propelled through intercultural exchanges and dialogues (Wang, 2000). It is important to underscore that this envisaged cultural amalgamation does not necessarily advocate for an absolute localization or heterogeneity of brands. Nonetheless, it is discernible that numerous contemporary China Chic designs still exhibit a surface-level engagement with local culture. However, several China Chic brands reflexively mimic the marketing paradigms of European and American hipster counterparts, often elevating them uncritically. In a similar vein, there exist instances where brands attempt to replicate the marketing blueprints of foreign fashion labels, juxtaposing them with traditional elements in the pursuit of achieving a "China Chic" identity (Lang & Zhang, 2020). Paradoxically, this approach misconstrues and, at times, even defiles the authentic application of traditional Chinese elements, thereby underscoring a conspicuous absence of a robust local cultural nucleus within the ambit of China Chic marketing communication.

In addition, in the current international context, Chinese and Western cultural exchanges are seldom characterised by large-scale positive and hard conflicts, and communication barriers are more often manifested in misunderstandings, time lags, and stereotypes (Li, Liu & Lu, 2020). For example, in the autumn and winter of 2018, New York Fashion Week, China Chic clothing, represented by China's Li Ning, gained the attention and appreciation of the global audience. However, the presentation of "China Chic" clothing is still influenced by the framework of European and American fashion discourse, including clothing design, suit matching, model selection, and runway sequences, all of which are strong elements of the French Louis XIV period (Dejean, 2012). Therefore, these China Chic garments have received attention for their "novelty" in the eyes of foreign designers and audiences, and have been recognised for not challenging the traditional fashion discourse (Marja, 2022).

Therefore, to address the problem of insufficient bearing and condensation of Chinese culture when China Chic brands go abroad, it is necessary to have an in-depth discussion from the perspective of international vision. We need to explore in depth the differences between cultures and civilisations, cultural conflicts in the historical context, and cultural misunderstandings in the real context to actively find effective methods and countermeasures to solve the problem. It is necessary to explore customers' aesthetic experiences of China Chic visual aesthetics from the perspective of user experience, and summarise the corresponding experience design framework.

### **2) Lack of exploration of customers' aesthetic experience**

In the visual design of China Chic, we found that the application of experience

design theory still needs to be improved. Currently, only visual impact is considered, ignoring the deeper exploration of users' aesthetic experiences and emotional needs. In The Experience Economy, people have begun to spend less on products and services and are more willing to pay for memorable and valuable experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Currently, people are pursuing a good life after their basic material needs are satisfied. Concepts such as immaterial society, economic aestheticisation, and the aestheticisation of everyday life all express concern about this phenomenon. Experience design has shifted from focusing on functionality to paying more attention to human experience, which has perceptual power. Consumers pay more attention to their emotional needs while they fully experience the convenience brought by the functional attributes of the product. Ultimately, the motivation to buy a product also depends on the degree to which the product satisfies personal experience and emotional demands (Alaniz & Biazzo, 2019). Compared with general products, cultural commodities mainly bring consumers pleasurable feelings and touch their inner emotions through their spiritual and cultural categories, aesthetic forms, inner meanings, cultural symbols, and other charming factors, thus triggering purchase behaviour (He, Lin & Liu, 1996).

However, among the existing research results on China Chic design, a few studies have focused on the theoretical study of users' aesthetic experience, and the focus of attention is mainly on the users' aesthetic evaluation of the colours, patterns, and structures of the appearance (Deng & Wang, 2020). There is a lack of in-depth exploration of consumer experience, internal emotions, and preferences. In today's context of pursuing consumer emotional experience, this is detrimental to the development of China Chic design and the progress of academic theories (Liu, Wang, Huang & Romainoor, 2022). Therefore, this paper improves the experience and cultural understanding between China Chic visual aesthetics and customers by exploring the aesthetic perception and emotional needs in user experience. In this way, market demands can be met more accurately and efficiently, while the spiritual connotation of China Chic design is strengthened, and its plasticity and overall dissemination are enhanced. Firstly, we sort out the definition and theoretical framework of China Chic visual aesthetics, and then analyse the related literature—the process and mechanism of users' aesthetic experience. Finally, we summarise the intrinsic correlation between China Chic visual aesthetics and users' aesthetic experience, and refine the spiritual connotation of China Chic visual aesthetics in order to excavate and satisfy users' perceived needs for aesthetic experience more precisely.

### 2.3. Theoretical Framework of China Chic Visual Aesthetics

Based on the above discussion, the essence of China Chic visual aesthetics lies in the combination of old and new, and the co-existence of tradition and trend. It not only possesses quality and innovation but also integrates elements of national emotion, traditional culture, and fashion trends to form a good emotional experience and

constantly undergo modern marketing transformation. In Lotman's theory of cultural analysis, visual semiotics can explain how visual images are derived from their cultural context, considering the relationship between primary, local, linguistic, and secondary cultures. Visual semiotics tends to liberate design from the central culture. Lotman's semiotic circle model (**Figure 1**) (Lotman 1990).

According to Lotman's interpretation, the central viewpoint is categorised as "I" and the suburbs as "Us" or "others." He describes this process as a four-step process of integrating externally designed products from the outside to the centre (**Figure 2**). First, what comes from the outside may seem strange, exotic, and valuable and breaks down conventional perceptions through an alien worldview. The visual design is then integrated and adapted to suit the local culture until the new elements are seen as a true part of the old. Finally, the new design is assimilated and used to create new elements that are brought back to the suburbs (Lotman, 2001). If this mechanism is applied to China Chic visual design and analysed and projected into Lotman's integrative process, it can be rationalised as a fusion of traditional Chinese culture, modern aesthetic sense and exotic design styles.

According to the six artistic characteristics of China Chic visual design combined with the review of traditional Chinese aesthetic theories, such as formal aesthetics, sensual aesthetics, and symbolic aesthetics, we can analyse their influence and applicability to China Chic visual aesthetics. China Chic visual aesthetics embodies the reverence for traditional Chinese culture and expresses the pursuit of national identity and national spirit. It also conveys social life needs, spiritual and cultural connotations, morphological attributes (elements and symbols, colours and colour scheme aesthetics, layout and composition aesthetics, materials, and craftsmanship), and emotional perceptions. **Figure 3** illustrates the theoretical framework of China Chic visual aesthetics, the specific explanation is as follows:

China Chic visual aesthetics emphasises connection and reflection of contemporary society, focuses on social issues, national emotions and national identity, and responds to the transformation of modern lifestyles and fashion trends. It often combines traditional Chinese culture, historical stories, and Chinese elements through design elements and symbols to meet modern society's pursuit of new lifestyles and global trends. In terms of spiritual and cultural connotations, China Chic visual aesthetics pursues depth and substance, emphasising the integration of traditional culture bearing and modern aesthetics. It conveys rich meanings through symbols, patterns, and words, and covers ideas from literature, philosophy, religion, and other fields. This form of aesthetics focuses on conveying aesthetic values and stimulating viewers' thinking and empathy through visual art expression. In addition, China Chic visual aesthetics also focuses on the innovation of form and expression of beauty. It uses rich elements and symbols to create visual and artistic effects through the aesthetics of colour and colour scheme, layout and composition, materials, and craftsmanship. It is characterised by simplicity, clarity, rich patterns, and vibrant colours, and also focuses on the combination of tradition and modernity to create a unique aesthetic experience. Emotional perception of China Chic visual aesthetics is usually

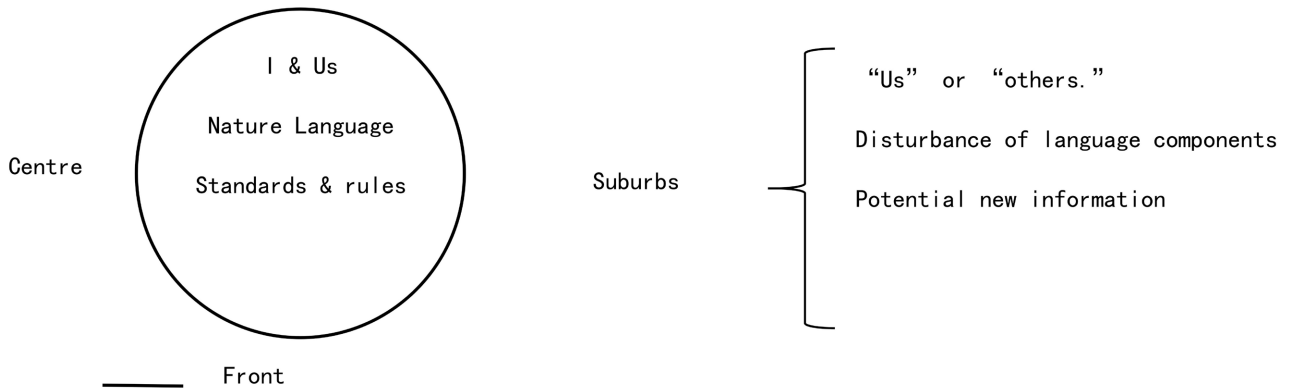


Figure 1. Lotman's symbol circle model, Source: from Lotman.

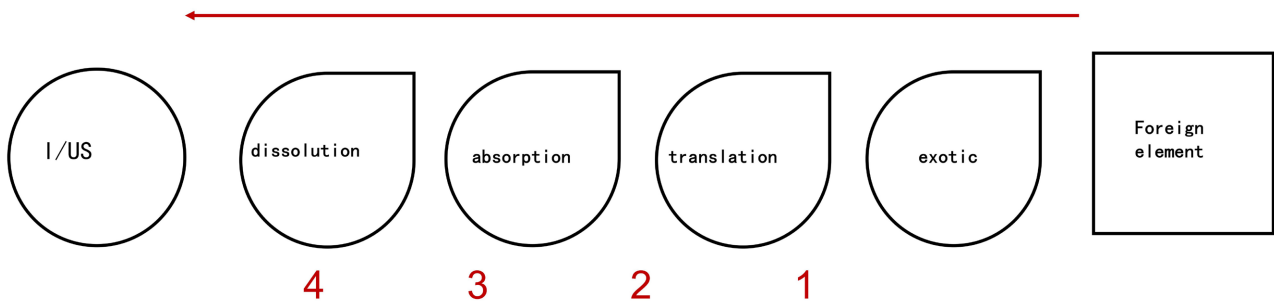


Figure 2. Integration phase of an exotic design product, Source: from Lotman.

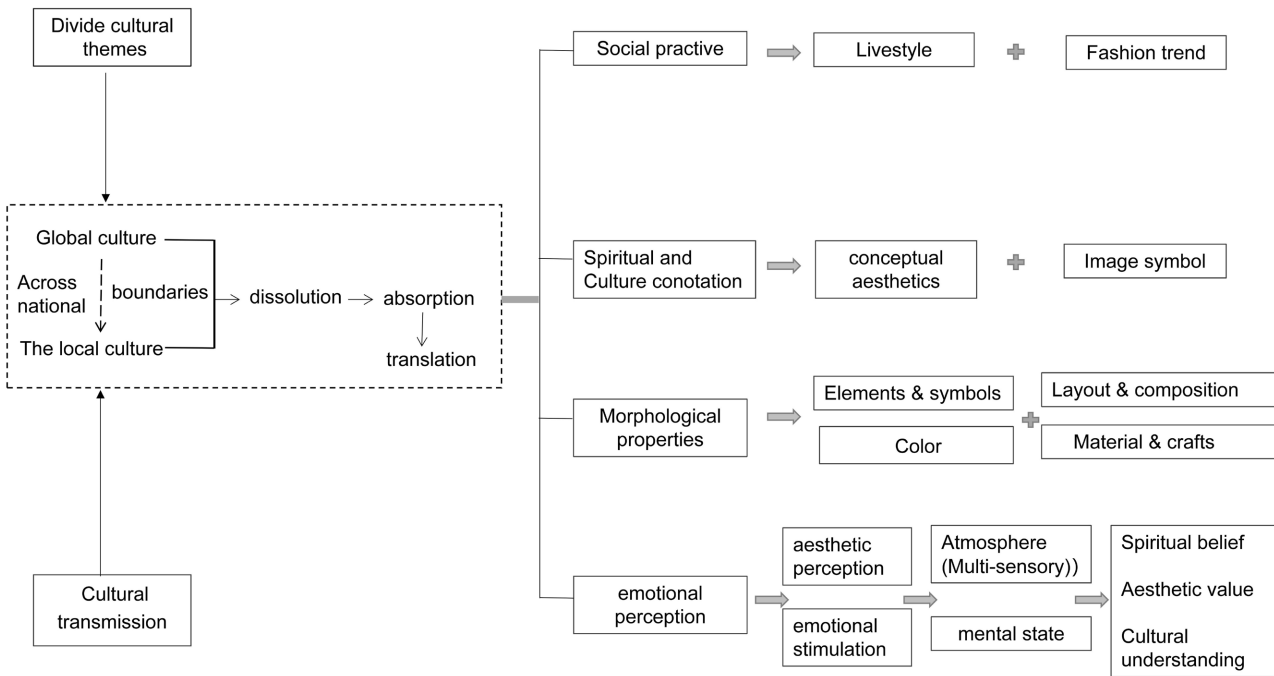


Figure 3. The theoretical framework of China Chic visual aesthetics, Source: Collated by the author.

triggered by environmental ambience and multi-sensory influences (such as hearing, smell, vision, taste, and touch) to trigger the viewer's aesthetic perception and emotional resonance to establish an emotional connection. Viewers'



emotional response to China Chic visual aesthetics is often influenced by their own spiritual beliefs, aesthetic values, and understanding of China Chic culture. China Chic visual aesthetics embodies and conveys the concern for the needs of social life, the pursuit of spiritual and cultural connotations, the innovation of morphological attributes and the establishment of a sense of beauty, as well as the triggering of emotional perceptions. Through these aspects, China Chic design presents a unique and powerful visual aesthetic effect, demonstrating China's contemporary cultural confidence and aesthetic pursuit.

#### 2.4. China Chic Visual Aesthetics Trend

Over the past decade, there has been a growing realisation that user needs go beyond usability and utility; therefore, the focus has shifted to a broader perspective of user experience, including emotional and visual aesthetics (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). Through research on consumers, Jingdong Design Centre found that the consumer mind of China Chic has gone through a process of change from “shallow” to “deep” and back to “shallow,” i.e., from superficial visual aesthetics to a more profound visual aesthetics. That is, from surface visual aesthetics to deeper cultural resonance and spiritual kernel, gradually becoming more profound and mature, and then gradually returning to daily life, around clothing, food, housing, and transport to get further fermentation and diffusion (JDC, 2022). The Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) studied the emotional appeal, cultural identity, values, and trend of the “China Chic” brand through a multi-faceted survey. From the perspective of China Chic's brand innovation strategy, it summarises the development trend of brand innovation driven by China Chic's design aesthetics, which shows the following points:

- 1) The depth of innovation extends from the visual symbols of a product to the spirit of aesthetics.
- 2) The trend gradually develops towards diversification, shifting from a niche elite culture to the spirit of mass life.
- 3) It penetrates into the lives of ordinary people and becomes a kind of post-modern Chinese aesthetics.
- 4) It shifts from a short-term trend to the sustainable development of cultural roots and transformations (CAFA, 2022).

China Chic visual design based on postmodernity is undergoing a transformation from single brand design to multiple design styles, and integrating into the daily life of ordinary people. The development process gradually extends from basic visual symbols to a deeper level of cultural identity, national spirit and popular aesthetics. This evolution has aroused the cultural confidence and spiritual identity of young Chinese people, making it a representative of Chinese style in the new era. In the future, the development of China Chic visual design will no longer be limited to China itself, but will become an important way of showcasing the national image of modern Chinese design in the context of globalisation. It aims to show the rise of China's sense of autonomy, raises concerns about issues such as the grasp of trends, design systems and design discourse

that represent its own culture, and hints at the emergence of a new visual form that will become postmodern. In addition, the core of the discourse power of design trend system is reflected in the cultural influence of the country and nation in the international fashion design system. Only by occupying a place at the forefront of mainstream culture and keeping in line with its own cultural discourse, fashion design trends can truly convey cultural strength, rather than becoming a self-expression of narrow nationalism.

To sum up, the aim of this paper is to study how to shape the theory and form of communication of Chinese postmodern design aesthetics in the process of establishing a commercially supported Chinese Chic design aesthetic system. In order to achieve this goal, we will explore how to abandon certain figurative and superficial forms, interpret the spiritual core of China Chic visual aesthetics more deeply, and give new vitality to traditional elements. We will tell the story of contemporary Chinese design and branding through the transformation of modern design and the use of a formal language familiar to young people. In addition, we will understand the customer's aesthetic and emotional perception of China Chic visual aesthetics in order to enhance the user experience. Through this process, we will explore how to set design trends, bridge the gap between Chinese and Western fashion cultures, and create valuable conceptual texts. Further, we will endeavour to establish a discursive design system that clarifies the value of cultural design and develops a uniquely Chinese design aesthetic character. Ultimately, these findings will provide a clear direction and necessary trends for the future development of China Chic visual aesthetics.

In exploring the process of shaping China Chic design aesthetics, the user's aesthetic experience plays an important role, which is closely related to artistic perception and interaction. Therefore, we need to delve into the role of users' aesthetic experience in it. As a unique psychological experience, aesthetic experience is of great significance to the theory and form of communication of postmodern design aesthetics in China. This paper will explore how to improve and establish the framework of China Chic design aesthetics through user aesthetic experience, and will draw on theoretical analyses and practices of related disciplines to ensure the academic value and contribution of the research. Through the in-depth study of user aesthetic experience, we hope to provide a clear direction and necessary trends for the future development of China Chic visual aesthetics, and make valuable contributions to the development of Chinese design aesthetics.

### **3. Definition and Process of User Aesthetic Experience**

#### **3.1. Definition of Aesthetic Experience**

The aesthetic experience is a unique psychological experience that is closely related to perception and interaction with art. Researchers usually reduce this experience to the study of specific sensory, perceptual, and cognitive processes that constitute an aesthetic experience (Lede & Nada, 2014). Domestic and interna-

tional academics have different views on its nature, with Tomonobu Imamichi arguing that whoever has a sense of beauty and contemplation of beauty, which he refers to as an aesthetic experience (Imamichi, 1997). Gadamer believed that true spiritual contemplation (deep experience) has the courage to break with reality in order to rebuild spiritual wholeness in broken reality. It can move on with a vision open of the future and an irreducible past, which is what we call the essence of experience (Gadamer & Zhang, 1991). Domestic academics have different interpretations of the nature of aesthetic experiences. Wang Yichuan defines aesthetic experience as the experience of the infinite in the finite and the eternal in the momentary of human activities, or the experience of the temporary peace in the eternal turmoil and the finite transcendence in the infinite loss of human activities, which human beings obtain on the basis of social practice (Wang, 1992). Also, Wang Yichuan believes that aesthetic experience is a special kind of aesthetic experience, which is strong and profound, rich and subtle, full, and intense, with the distinctive features of being in the place, intense emotion, rich imagination, sudden inspiration, forgetting the thing, and the same thing. Although the expressions are different, they all regard aesthetic experience as a special form of life experience.

### 3.2. The Process of User Aesthetic Experience

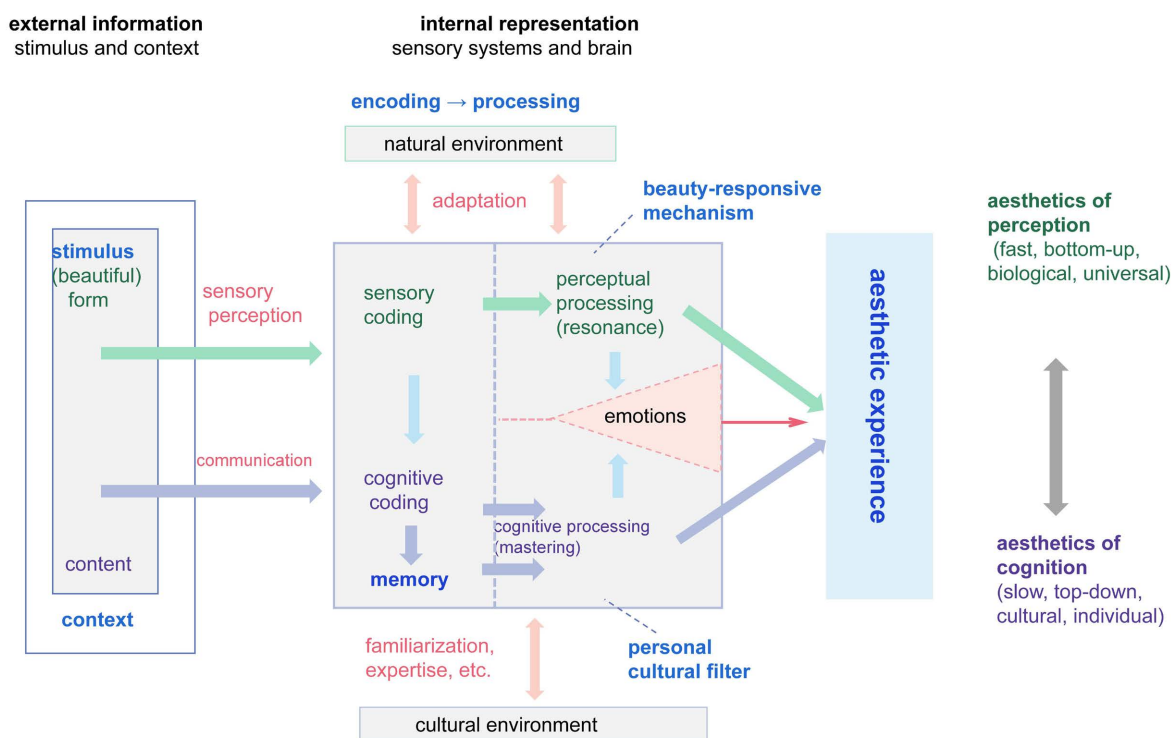
Aesthetic experience is a gradual and dynamic process. The alternation and mutual penetration of observation, feeling, cognition, understanding, and comprehension gradually deepens from the surface (Wang, 2004). The static state of the aesthetic experience process is more obvious in the stage of aesthetic perception. As the aesthetic subject's experience deepens, aesthetic psychological functions such as association, imagination, emotion, understanding, recollection, and hallucination are intertwined with each other, pervading the aesthetic subject's mind (Iseminger, 2005). At this time, it is impossible for the aesthetic subject to remain in a state of static observation but will enter an aesthetic state of emotion, which may result in joy, sorrow, happiness, anger, and even forgetfulness of hand dancing.

It is because the process of aesthetic experience is progressive and dynamic, aesthetic experience can be divided into many levels, and the higher the level, the greater the subjective component. Wang (1992) states that the structure of aesthetic experience contains the following three levels: the first is the historical structure layer, which is the level of past experiences. The second is the construction layer, which is the level of present experience of the scene. The third is the level and hierarchy of pre-constructed future feelings (Wang, 1992). Then, according to the process of mental activity, from shallow to deep, it is simplified and explained. The first level is direct experience, or perceptual experience; the second level is identity experience; and the third level is reflective experience. It should be noted that all three levels of aesthetic experience contain transient and conjunctive experiential structures. Direct experience means that when the sub-

ject's sense organs encounter various external stimuli such as colour, shape, and sound, a sense of pleasure is created in the heart without thinking. For example, when one sees a rose, the colour and shape of the rose delight the person without any imagination or thought. In art appreciation, direct experience is in direct contact with the work of art. It is not mediated by imagination, associations, concepts, or theories developed at the second and third levels (Bullot & Reber, 2013). Identity experience refers to the emotional resonance between the aesthetic subject and the aesthetic object in aesthetic activities, in which the aesthetic subject identifies himself/herself as the aesthetic object in his/her imagination or associates the aesthetic object with something else related to himself/herself or something else that has touched himself/herself before (Husserl, 2007). Reflective experience refers to an introspective grasp of one's psychological world. From the perspective of aesthetics, reflective experience refers to people's attention to and appreciation of their original psychological state, which is transcendental, transcending both the specific situation in which people are living and the psychological reaction directly caused by this situation. Thus, reflective experience is a kind of re-experience, or the experience of experience (Tong, 1993).

Redies (2015) proposed a model of visual aesthetic experience that incorporates formalistic and contextual aspects of aesthetics (shown in Figure 4). The model distinguishes between these two modes of processing. First, perceptual processing is based on the intrinsic form of the artifact, which may or may not contain elements of beauty. When elements of beauty are present, the "beauty response mechanism" is activated in the brain. This bottom-up mechanism is prevalent in humans, is widely distributed in visual brain regions, and responds to various visual patterns. Second, cognitive processing is based on contextual information, such as the content of the description of the work, the intention of the artist or the context in which the artwork is presented. Cognitive processing is a top-down process that varies according to cultural experiences. These two processing channels occur in parallel and are largely independent. Generally, an aesthetic experience occurs if both channels of processing are beneficial; that is, it resonates in the perceptual processing channel ("perceptual aesthetics") and is successfully understood in the cognitive processing channel ("cognitive aesthetics"). Primitive emotions can be evoked and modulate the degree of aesthetic experience through these two channels.

During aesthetic experience, users go through a series of stages, each of which significantly impacts their experience. The first stage is the interest and exploration stage, which determines whether the user is interested in an object or work and is willing to explore it further. Next, the user perceives the work through the senses and attempts to understand its connotations and meanings. In the second stage, customers' cognitive evaluation and memory play an important role as they cognitively evaluate and retain the work in their memory process, which is key to forming the final aesthetic evaluation and experience. The customer then



**Figure 4.** Christoph's model of visual aesthetic experience, Source: from Christoph.

considers the influence of social factors, including culture, social identity, and group. In the third stage, all stages interact to create dynamic changes throughout the aesthetic experience. Through a deeper understanding of the process of users' visual aesthetic experience, users' perceptions and needs can be better understood, providing guidance and insights for constructing the aesthetic experience framework of China Chic visual aesthetics.

#### 4. The Construction of the Aesthetic Experience Framework of China Chic Visual Aesthetics

China Chic visual aesthetics has a close relationship with users' aesthetic experience, and the framework is constructed to provide users with an experience that is pleasurable, resonant, and satisfies their aesthetic needs. The process of aesthetic experience involves the constant interaction of the human body, internal psychology, and external environment, and its elements include the aesthetic subject (customer), the aesthetic object (China Chic visual aesthetics), and the aesthetic context (space and atmosphere). Therefore, the aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics involves stimulating the customer's body through the aesthetic object and aesthetic context presented in the surface form, triggering the inner psychological activities, and ultimately providing concrete pleasure.

##### 4.1. The Spatial Turn in China Chic Visual Aesthetics—Immersion Communication and Body Perception

The spatial turn has elevated the Western academic understanding of the con-

cept of space from sociological thought to the level of philosophical theory, and promoted interdisciplinary exchanges between spatial and aesthetic theories, characterised by plurality, heterogeneity, and multidisciplinary approaches. This promotes the transformation of aesthetic research paradigms and the amendment of methodological principles, providing an opportunity to expand the theoretical horizons and research resources of contemporary aesthetics. The interaction between spatial theory and aesthetic research has contributed to the development of interpretive aesthetics, incorporating aesthetic theory into spatial considerations and providing a practical “spatial aesthetics” approach to interpreting postmodern design aesthetics. Pei Xuan (2014) explains the construction of “experience-empathy-reflection” aesthetic methodology, with “experience” as the core principle, “empathy” as the inter-subjective value relationship, and “reflection” as the means of aesthetic sublimation. The inherent factor of space in experience and aesthetics constructs a new dimension of space aesthetics that echoes the traditional Chinese concept of aesthetics and provides a unique perceptual experience from the intrinsic dimension. Simultaneously, this “bottom-up” methodological construction is in line with the current norms of aesthetic ontology.

The spatial turn of China Chic visual aesthetics refers to the fact that in China Chic culture, the expression of visual aesthetics gradually expands from the analysis of symbols and images to the exploration and application of spatial dimensions. Traditionally, China Chic visual aesthetics focuses more on using visual elements such as patterns, colours and symbols to express unique cultural characteristics and fashion styles. However, with the development and diversification of China Chic culture, an increasing number of designers and artists have begun to focus on extending China Chic visual aesthetics into the experience of spatial environments and atmospheres, which helps deepen the immersive dissemination of China Chic visual aesthetics and enrich the actual experience of customers. Taking the fragrance brand To Summer as an example, the brand expresses itself through the realisation of original Chinese oriental fragrance products based on oriental culture. In the use of oriental elements and culture, Summer brand design avoids excessive use of visually striking national style elements, interprets the oriental aesthetics of new Chinese modernism on both a sensual and rational level, and leads a life philosophy of fragrance and scent that belongs to China. If the language of space is regarded as an asset of the brand, the customers of offline shops themselves become specific participants and developers of the scene culture. The consensus formed between the brand and consumer is reflected in the products and personalisation. Summers’ attention to customers’ aesthetic experiences is reflected in the creation of spatial details and atmosphere. As for Summer’s flagship shop, Guozijian is located in a hutong with a rich history and culture. As shown in **Figure 5**, the shop has been remodelled and restored to create a vibrant oriental aesthetic mood, and the design focuses on creating a sense of space that allows users to connect the products to

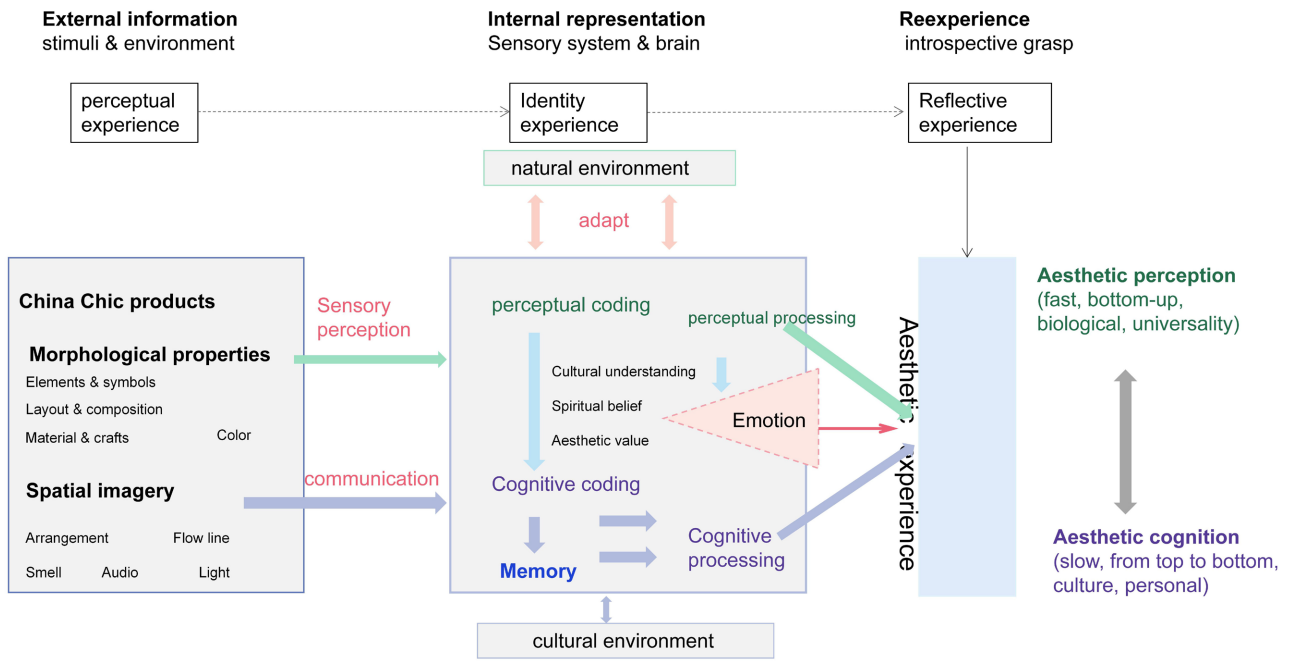


**Figure 5.** To Summer's Guozijian flagship store, Source: from To summer.

their own lifestyles. In such a specific space, the characteristic spatial mood capable of showcasing To Summer is rendered with just the right touch by utilising naturally occurring oriental courtyard elements (Zheng et al, 2021). This specific space allows consumers to immerse themselves in the slow-paced atmosphere created by To Summer. The planning and creation of an aesthetic experience for the customer is based on customers' consumption psychology and experience perception. In the current era of serious involution and the prevalence of a lying culture, young people seem more interested in stable and healing energy in their leisure time rather than pursuing apathy and transcendence. Against this backdrop, ancient traditional cultural sites naturally have a sense of history, exuding the emotional healing effect of slowing down time. These elements of traditional culture enrich the customer's perception of the consumption scene, and the immersive experience accompanied by an unlimited exploration of the brand's culture and visual aesthetics makes every contact with the brand more evocative. Therefore, when customers are fully immersed in the spatial atmosphere of China Chic visual aesthetics, they obtain a complete aesthetic experience. In this immersive environment, customers can become one with the China Chic visual aesthetic and feel the pleasure of the cultural heritage and unique atmosphere. By sharing this complete aesthetic experience with the brand, customers can establish a deeper emotional connection and derive more satisfaction and identity.

#### **4.2. Aesthetic Experience Framework of China Chic Visual Aesthetics**

This paper explores a framework for the aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics by analysing three aspects: the display of China Chic visual aesthetics, the customers themselves, and the aesthetic experience and perception. The goal of the framework is to provide customers with an integrated aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics. Based on the above content analyses, this study constructed a conceptual framework (Figure 6), including China Chic products, morphological attribute displays, spatial mood creation, customer self-interpretation, and aesthetic experience steps.



**Figure 6.** The aesthetic experience frame of China Chic visual aesthetics, Source: Collated by the author.

In this framework, China Chic products refer to all kinds of products under the China Chic brand, including apparel, accessories, cultural and creative products, drinks, and food. These products play a central role in the whole framework, and customers can directly try on and taste them to truly feel the tactile, olfactory, and gustatory stimulation they bring. Shape attribute refers to the manner of display with visual form as the main expression method. By the summary and collation of China Chic elements and symbols, layout and composition, materials and craftsmanship, colours and colour schemes, the unique style of China Chic products and the modernisation of traditional symbols can be dissected and shown in detail. The creation of a spatial mood refers to the creation of a specific environmental atmosphere in an exhibition space to further enhance customers' perception and experience of China Chic products. This includes the display layout, lighting settings, China Chic scent, and China Chic music. It aims to create the aesthetics and mood of the entire China Chic space with the main consideration of the customer's immersive experience. As it enters the stage of the customer's identification experience, self-interpretation is performed. This refers to a customer's interpretation and understanding based on their background, experience, and aesthetic preference when viewing and touching China Chic products. Each customer may have a different interpretation, showing the aesthetic experience's individuality and self-interpretation. The overall steps consist of a series of processes that customers go through when they perceive and engage with China Chic products, including attention attraction, triggering emotional resonance, perceiving the details of the product, interacting with the product, which constitutes the customer's aesthetic experience.

Overall, the framework is designed to guide customers to personalised self-



interpretation when viewing and touching China Chic products by displaying morphological attributes and creating spatial contexts, thus realising a comprehensive aesthetic experience of China Chic visual aesthetics. This framework helps designers, brands, and retailers better understand their customers' needs and provide a more attractive and personalised China Chic design and shopping experience. In addition, the framework provides a foundation and theoretical support for the advancement of China Chic visual design and the establishment of a theoretical system of postmodern Chinese oriental aesthetics.

## 5. Conclusion

This study aims to provide customers with a comprehensive aesthetic experience by analysing and exploring the aesthetic experience framework of China Chic visual aesthetics. In this framework, a unique and personalised visual experience is created for customers through a trial of China Chic products, a display of morphological attributes, and the creation of a spatial mood. Simultaneously, the customer's self-interpretation and aesthetic experience steps are also included in the framework, emphasising the customer's subjective feelings and individual needs. In this framework, the customer's self-interpretation plays an important role, as each customer has a unique background and aesthetic preference, and their interpretation gives meaning to the diversity and individuality of China Chic products. In addition, aesthetic experience is a key element of the framework. From attention-grabbing to emotional resonance to the perception of product details and interaction, these steps together form a complete aesthetic experience for the customer. Through careful design and presentation, customers can be guided through each step toward a pleasurable, satisfying, and profound experience. However, the framework requires further research and practice to be refined and validated. As society and aesthetics are constantly changing, the framework of China Chic visual aesthetics must also keep up with the times and continuously adapt to new aesthetic trends and customer needs.

In summary, the framework of China Chic visual aesthetics based on users' aesthetic experience provides an essential reference for researchers and practitioners in related fields to enhance customers' perception and experience of China Chic products. Through continuous exploration and innovation, we can further promote the development of China Chic visual aesthetics and provide customers with a richer and more personalised aesthetic experience.

## Conflicts of Interest

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

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