



Cultural Details in China's Commercial Display

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Abstract

With the development of economy and the conversion of consumption in China, increasing importance has been attached to the form and scale of commercial display. By emphasizing the indispensable role of culture, this article aims at encouraging Chinese businesses to combine commercial display with Chinese culture, in which Chinese cultural background and consumption characteristics should be based on to establish a commercial display pattern with Chinese characteristics.

Keywords: Commercial display design, Characters

Qichao Liang once defined culture as including all human activities. Accordingly, commercial display, one of human activities, will not escape from the influences brought about by cultural tradition, human background and social environment. That is to say, the cultural details in different countries will bring some influences on their commerce and art. On the other hand, commercial display will become one part in culture by retroacting on it. This process is called "interaction".

Originating in Europe, commercial display has become one of the important operation methods employed by modern enterprises due to the mature consumption culture there. Therefore, it is an advance in our commercial economy era. With the interaction between commercial display and culture, the whole sales space with completed commercial display design is endowed with cultural value, which has appeared in designers' minds at the very beginning. To be more specific, it helps designers to fix the angle and target of their designs and extend their requirements. From another perspective, in addition to satisfying people's demands in use, a commercial display design interacting with culture will reveal the retroactive effects of its entity design on people and society in a more obvious way.

Led by its brand culture, commercial display design is to promote commodity sales and transmission of brand culture by combining pure display space, semi display space and sales display space into a whole. However, China is still in the early stage of commercial display. Quite different from the popular bombing advertisement strategy in China, foreign brands usually employ rational advertising strategy with their emphasis on their end images. Their elaborate planning for commodity display, even for a ground tile's material and color, gives them access to customers' souls. With European and American countries first creating commercial display to employ information to handle their brands and culture, their technology, culture, concept and fashion of brand display is well ahead that of China.

China's commercial world is lacking in fashion elements and desirable atmosphere. Although a lot of businesses try to imitate the styles of foreign countries, the result tends to be a failure, which should be attributed to the late and low start of China's commercial display as well as the poor knowledge of commercial display in the whole business industry. Therefore, there is still a long way to go to conduct commercial display successfully. Fortunately, the rapid growth of commodity retails in the recent years has provided fertile soil on which commercial display will be developed. In addition, the perfection and internationalization of market economy has also elevated the significance of commercial display in an enterprise's sales strategies. Actually, as an outcome of our new consumption notion as well as a necessary consequence of detailed social division of labor, commercial display will step into a rapid-development stage in China in the near future.

However, we are expected to face a premise--the influence of Chinese culture on commercial display--before the arrival of this stage.

China has incomparable cultural details all over the world. Among all the shops in SoHo, New York, a store window design seems to be particularly attractive, in which double "Xi"s have conveyed the connotation of double happiness as well as revealing the combination of two individuals, two nations and two or even more cultures

Perhaps it is due to the tranquil and mild philosophy and the notion of harmony between human life and nature in Chinese culture that many designers employ Chinese culture to demonstrate the universal nature of commercial culture.

Chinese culture has formed its unique structure and Chinese characters after going through thousands of years' development. Its brief, implicative, reserved and euphemistical expressions are in sharp contract with the lengthy and

direct ones of western culture. Actually, these are not only the characteristics of Chinese culture but the essence of civilization. As far as modern China's commercial display is concerned, the indispensable role of Chinese cultural essence in the future development of commercial display should be emphasized.

One characteristics of Chinese culture lies in its characters, which are an important part of culture and art and have been endowed with function and form at the very beginning. Characters can not only convey information, express ideas as well as pass down history. In addition, characters are a kind of mature, elegant and abstract art because they derive from figures. An individual character will form an ornamental design as well as express certain ideas. For example, the Chinese character "Fu", besides its connotation of prosperity and happiness, is also employed as an ornamental sign for Chinese traditional festivals, as which it is written in the center of a piece of red paper in square shape and then the is put on doors upside down to bring prosperity (shown in Figure 1). Besides the profound connotations embodied by simple Chinese characters which any western culture is unable to achieve, Chinese people are endowed with the same nature and connotation. Therefore, when appreciating commercial display, Chinese consumers have their unique sense of aesthetics and emotions, which force designers to include Chinese culture as an important part in their commercial display designs. Only in this way will the designs are accepted and appreciated by Chinese people.



Figure 1.

On the other hand, Chinese characters have varied fonts, including Song, Li, Weibei and Xing and so on (shown in Figure 2), with varied visual effects and information as well as unique processes of formation and development. Therefore, when employed, they express quite different emotions, ideas, and charms. Certainly, if employed in proper environment, they will be the jewel of the whole display space by making it more harmonious and distinctive; otherwise, just painting the lily.

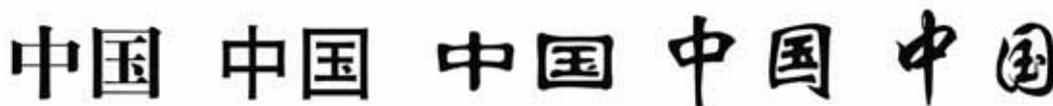


Figure 2.

It is due to the unique Chinese culture that Chinese consumers' aesthetic angle is different from that of European and American countries in color, style, characters and other aspects when appreciating commercial displays. Obviously, it is improper to copy the display pattern prevalent over the world, which, instead of improving China's standard in commercial display, will lead to some negative results. Therefore, China's commercial display should begin with its culture. To be more specific, display pattern, brand and Chinese culture should be combined together from the very beginning to create a commercial display pattern which accords and will get perfect with the development of a certain brand.

With the constant development of China's economy, Chinese people's consumption standard is getting elevated, which means that only copying the present technologies in commercial display prevalent in the world will not fulfill the development of the whole industry. Instead, localization should be relied on to development China's commercial display

technologies. For example, the American display style employed by Packson Shopping Center which was not welcomed by Chinese consumers has revealed the decisive function of a nation's cultural details and consumers' aesthetic habits in commercial display design. Those European and American patterns for commercial display are formed based on their cultural background and brand development, hence being unconformable to Chinese business world and leading to the failure in commodity introduction. Therefore, the unique cultural background and consumption characteristics in China should be based on to create the proper commercial display pattern with Chinese characteristics and to perfect it with the development of Chinese culture.

Different brands are created in different places, whose cultural background will be that of brands and in which brands get developed. As for China's commercial display, businesses are expected to employ art forms with Chinese cultural characteristics to demonstrate their brands and design ideas. Both the fashion elements for commercial display all over the world and Chinese culture should be manifested in China's commercial display. In addition, the onefold learning pattern should be converted into the innovative pattern through which China's commercial display will form its own style. Only in this way will Chinese brands be developed into international ones because only those with national characteristics will be shared by the whole world.

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