Study on the Application of Visualized Brand Identity in Bag Design

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Abstract—This paper takes a case study over the product image recognition system of international bag brands, analyzing the constitutions and design application methods of visualized brand identity, revealing the basic principles in its development and application, exploring the importance of visualized brand identity in creating the images of bag products, and offering practical suggestions to Chinese bag manufacturers in their transformation from OEM mode to ODM mode and finally to OBM mode.

Keywords—continuity, differentiation, visualized brand identity

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2011 the international luxury goods market was developing in a fast pace, especially most of those luxury brands with bags as main products were with a two-digit growth in global sales. While on contrast, China’s cost advantage for being bag manufacturing center has been disappearing in the process of globalization. Most of the Chinese bag manufacturers urgently need to complete the transformation of ‘OEM→ODM→OBM’ and improve their brand operation capacity, product planning and development capacity in order to improve their competitiveness in both domestic and international market. The most urgent issue is ‘how to improve the product planning, product design and development capacity of Chinese bag manufacturers’. In her long career in designing and teaching about the design of bags, the writer realizes the importance of ‘visualized brand identity elements’ in the establishment of the brand image of bags and in the differentiate development of products. Therefore this paper would explore and summarize such findings in order to offer inspirations in bag design and development.

II. THE ELEMENTS IN BAG DESIGNING

Narrowly speaking, bags are accessories to clothes, and they are only for decoration and complementary purposes. But with the development of fashion, bags are no longer playing supporting roles; they become one of the symbols for cultural status and identity. People not only care about their styles and colors for specified dress, but also pay more and more attention on their fashion, decoration and function elements. Nowadays in the interrelation of industrial production design and fashion design, bag design elements are very complicated in application, but can be summarized as followed:

A. Mode and structure

Bag styles are shaped by both structural design and production techniques. The external structure includes the front and rear sector, side chock plug, foundation structure, open-and-close device, hand strip, pockets, etc. The internal structure includes internal surface, interlayer and pockets, etc. The design of bag style is done by modifying and changing based on their basic structure. The designers would adopt techniques like cutting, plisse, adding or changing various parts for innovation and transformations.

B. Materials and colors

Bag materials include the types of materials and their texture. The types of materials include various natural leathers, PU leathers, PVC artificial leathers, textile materials, plastic and other types of materials. The texture of materials refers to the natural texture and quality of the materials or those they acquired after being processed.

The colors of bags mostly depend on the texture of their materials, while the texture of such materials would directly affect the visual identity of those colors. As an important part of accessories to clothes, the color selection in designing the bags is inevitably affected by international fashion trends. While at the same time, consumer color psychology and the basic principles for color matching shall be given enough attention to.

C. Accessories and fittings

The accessories for bags include lining, core materials, matting materials, adhesive, polishing oil, threads, etc., while the fittings include various latches, hinges, handles and decorations. The materials for those accessories and fittings include metals, plastics, woods, leathers and fibers and so on, and their production involves different techniques. But after all, the selection of materials and styles must be based on the positioning and function of the bags.

III. APPLICATION OF VISUALIZED BRAND IDENTITY TO BAG DESIGN

The product identification system is a system constituted with a series of methods and programs, educating the customers about the brand philosophy and value through unique product design. Those parts in the system that can be visually communicated would be simply understood as ‘visualized brand identity’ carried in the bag products. It can be found in all
the major products, and it will continue to be developed, in order to present the uniqueness of the product through the coordination of those products in different forms.

After a systematic analysis on the successful international brands of bags, it can be easily concluded that the introduction of “visualized brand identity” system during the transformation of Chinese bag brands will bring immediate and effort-saving results. The elements of visualized brand identity of bags are as follows:

**A. Original mode elements**

In Visual Identity System (VIS) of brands, the logo, standard font and color are called the brand DNA. These elements must be used under the principles of Corporate Identity System, and they shall not be changed without sufficient reason. So those are called the original mode elements in visualized brand identity, among which the logo and standard font are the profound features for consumers to recognize a brand and they must be applied to the development of bag products.

For the slender shape of the standard fonts, they are often used on the O-shape fasteners, D-shape fasteners, half-round fasteners, magnetic buttons, nap fasteners, corn rings, decoration nails, foot nails and zippers. They are used together with substrate materials, and such application is realized through the techniques of pressing, die-casting or injection. For its graphic features, the logo is often directly produced with metals or feathers to be used on visible positions on the products. Or the logo can produce different visual effects through different processing techniques, such as decoration with various materials, embroidery, fretwork, etc.

The logo and standard fonts of bag brands are often used in combination, and many international brands would use letter logo for more convenient identity by consumers, but such method is too conventional for its plainness and restriction by original elements.

**B. Derivative elements**

The various graphs and decorative patterns based on the logo and standard fonts and brand cultures are the most important elements in the design of accessory bag products.

Derivative graphs: These graphs are based on standard logo or the initial/abbreviated letters of standard fonts, and they are varied according to the connections between different product series. For example, GUCCI use three kinds of double-G graphs with different product series, they are with the same origin, similar but slightly different patterns, so their consumers can easily recognize and remember them.

Decorative brand patterns: they are the decorative patterns with standard logo, standard fonts or derivative graphs as their unit graphs and they are designed according to the design logics of continuous or splashed patterns. This method is straightforward and also flexible, thus it has become the most widely used method for brand identity purposes in the development of bag products. Those famous brands like GUCCI and COACH are widely using such method for development of products with visualized brand identity according to their quality and target countries. The other decorative patterns are accepted by customers because of the cultural origin of those brands, such as the classic family check patterns of BURBERRY have become an identity feature that is even more famous than its logo and standard fonts.

Color elements: colors can offer rich associations, and the unified color identity through use of the same color or combination of colors is a popular method in establishing visualized brand identity.

**C. Material elements**

Materials are basic elements for bag products, and the visualized brand identity can be achieved by shaping unique patterns of those materials through innovative technical processing. In selection of the materials, the connection between their features and the brand positioning shall be considered. For example, the Hermes leather products have always been using the leathers for making harness, so people in leather industry would refer to this kind of leathers as ‘Hermes leathers’. Chanel choose a combination of diamond-type lattice cotton and gold chain, and the consumers refer to similar products as ‘Chanel style’ products, for their typical material selection. The Bottega Veneta, which is a top Italian luxury leather brand, use hand-woven leather crafts that has become the first visualized brand identity element of this brand, and even more, such crafts have almost become a symbol of luxury and become extremely popular in Asian-pacific region.

**D. Structural style elements**

The special appearance and detailed design of products can not only offer reasonable structure and functions, but also deepen the customers’ visual impression on the brand. For example, since its development in 1947, the bamboo handle of GUCCI bags has become the distinguished symbol of the brand. The CELINE bags with ‘ṭ’ shape has become very popular in recent years, while at the same time they have become the first product series with truly visualized brand identity. Also the bony surface of CHOLE is an unique visual feature of this brand.

IV. APPLICATION PRINCIPLES

The visualized brand identity elements can effectively assist the bags companies in creating a unique product visual identity system and a good brand image, so as to obtain the differential advantages in increasing the added value of their brands. They can not only visualize the cultural features of the brands, but also grow and derive in changed designs.

**A. Coexistence of originality and aesthetics**

The design and application of visualized brand identity elements of bags shall unconditionally stick to the principle of originality. Such originality has unique and exclusive characteristics, thus creates differentiation. The DNA of the visualized identity system of each brand is different, so the visualized brand identity elements can easily be original. From another perspective, it is very difficult to make design of visual identity elements with predetermined standard brand logo, standard fonts and cultural features meet high aesthetic
standard on different bag products. In the initial stage of the product development, designers shall focus on the aesthetic features and prepare multiple proposals for design experiments, cost estimation and technique assessment.

B. Coexistence of continuity and innovation

The visualized brand identity elements help in shaping certain brand identity among the consumers through constant visual stimulations, but they are not duplicates, and are continuously developing and innovating under the principle of continuity and innovation. The companies will find some representative products in the process of development, marketing and selling, and define such products with visualized brand identity through constant modifications. Designers can help to build the brand loyalty of consumers and shape the unique brand image through constant innovation in functions, techniques and major visual characteristic elements of bag products. For example, they can use the latest materials, change some parts of the structure, improve processing techniques, etc., in order to find a perfect balance between changing and unchanging.

C. Complementarity between system and theme

For the product development system of bag companies, the visualized brand identity elements are a complete system. It shall be continuously developed while integrating the positioning of brands, the development plan of products, international fashion trends and so on. It shall reveal the connections between different products in one collection without losing their unique theme features in order to create vivid and diversified products and express the brand concept.

V. CONCLUSION

The design capacity of Chinese brands of bags still has a long way behind that of the international brands. The author is fully aware that the product is the most important spokesman for a company, and it is one of the most effective methods in shaping the brand image among the consumers. Designers shall make full use of visualized brand identity elements for bag products in style, decoration, functions, colors, materials and so on. They shall integrate the concepts, forms, materials, details, sizes and other elements in order to shape a unified and identifiable brand image.

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