

On the "Visual Empathy" of Ethnic Culture of the Group from Poster Design

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ABSTRACT

In the new era of socialism with Chinese characteristics, emotions are intervening in people's consciousness in some subtle ways, and the social role of emotional empathy is gradually emerging. Posters, as an art of information transmission in daily life, often have certain educational significance in the content they display. Therefore, it has become inevitable to rethink the modern significance of excellent traditional Chinese culture. From the perspective of art design, this article combines the principles of visual perception and the theory of empathy to explore the process by which poster design, through visual presentation, enables individuals and even social groups to generate emotional empathy for national culture. Starting from the identity of designers, it also studies the key points of poster design that triggers visual empathy of national culture, providing new thinking directions and action paths for integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into poster design in the future.

KEYWORDS

Poster Design; National Culture; Vision; Empathy; Empathetic Communication

In the information and network age, emotions are intervening in people's consciousness with certain significant effects. In the new era, we are encountering great changes unseen in a century, and strengthening cultural confidence is related to the rise and fall of the national destiny. Taking poster design as an example, this article combines visual and empathetic communication factors to explore the process of vision - induced emotional and affective resonance of the national culture among the group, and studies the functional mechanism of visual empathy in poster design and the operational key points of integrating excellent national culture into poster design. It broadens the social significance of the visual effect and also provides ideas and references for integrating excellent traditional Chinese culture into poster design in the future.

1 Visual Concept

As early as the 5th century BC, many philosophers had different views on vision. For example, Empedocles, an ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus, the first atheist philosopher in the West, and Aristotle, the great ancient Greek philosopher, all provided different interpretations of vision. Until Claudius Galen, the authority in Roman medicine, through a large number of anatomical experiments on animals, inferred the structure of the human body and deeply connected human vision with the brain, thus advancing the research on visual theory. Later, with the continuous development of scientists in successive dynasties and experimental instruments, people gradually

gained a more scientific and clear understanding of vision. Vision is one of the important ways to form human perception. Rudolf Arnheim pointed out that perception, especially visual perception, has all the abilities of thinking, and visual activity is entirely an active activity.

2 IEmpathy

The “empathy” discussed in this article is close to words such as “sympathy” and “resonance”. Idioms similar to it include “a heart of compassion” and “working in unity and cooperation”. The above explanations are closer to the literal meaning and have universality. The empathy process contains a complete logical chain, including knowledge, emotion, and action, that is, cognition - emotion - action. Only when the corresponding action is included and the social effect is reflected can “empathy” be complete.

Scholars Liu Conghui, Wang Yongmei, Yu Guoliang, and Wang Yongjun have provided a comprehensive explanation of “empathy”: when an individual faces (or imagines) the emotional situation of one or more individuals, first, there is a sharing of the emotions and feelings of others. Then, on the premise of recognizing the difference between the self and others, a cognitive assessment of the overall situation is carried out, resulting in an emotional - affective reaction accompanied by corresponding behaviors (explicit or implicit behaviors), and the psychological process in which the subject directs these emotions, feelings, and behaviors towards the object. There are still many disputes regarding the definition of empathy, and many scholars are still constantly researching and exploring^[1].

Since empathy emphasizes the spread of individual emotions, it is necessary to mention the understanding of “empathy” in the communication field. Scholar Zhao Jianguo defines “empathic communication” as: empathic communication is the formation process and the transmission and diffusion process of common or similar emotions and feelings. This definition does not mention the “emotions of the group”, but “common or similar emotions and feelings” correspond to “the emotions of the group”, leaving more space for empathic communication. It no longer emphasizes the emotional - affective relationship between individuals, but expands to study new relationship models between individuals and groups and between groups on the basis of focusing on the relationship between individuals^[2].

3 Empathy of National Culture

The organic combination of empathy and national culture often has unexpected results for forging a strong sense of community among the Chinese nation. Once empathy is formed, in most cases, its momentum is large and intense; the threshold for empathetic communication is low, and the instinctive emotions of individuals are easily influenced by each other. Once a certain emotion of an individual is aroused, most people often get caught in the vortex of “collective emotion”. Therefore, being good at utilizing the characteristics of empathy and combining them with national culture plays an important role in strengthening the Chinese nation's cultural confidence and national pride. Visual language, as the core of posters, conveys information content related to all dimensions of people's lives. In today's globalization, “cultural invasion” incidents occur frequently. First, there was Toyota's “humiliating China” advertisement, in which a car was driven onto the Lugou Bridge and the stone lions on the bridge bowed to the car in homage; later, there was the “toxic textbook” incident, including sexual innuendos in primary school extracurricular reading books, travel magazines recommending the Yasukuni Shrine as a scenic spot, and using Japanese invaders to stage propaganda photos for learning from Lei Feng. The purposes behind the

seemingly simple information are outrageous. Posters, as one of the most common means in daily life that can most influence people's "national emotions", it is very necessary to reflect excellent traditional Chinese culture in them, whether from the perspective of promoting one's own culture or in response to foreign "cultural infiltration".

4 The Logic of Visual Empathy Occurrence

Vision is an important way for individuals to receive external information internally. People break through their own boundaries through empathy to achieve spiritual communication with others. In the process of human interaction, it often provides powerful healing ability and plays an important role in human social interaction activities. The realization of empathy is based on the transmission of information to the outside with the individual as the unit. Although the unit conditions for the realization of the two are different, vision is an indispensable part of the perception process. Therefore, empathy is inseparable from vision. However, if it is concluded that vision is the basis of empathy, empathy will be confined to a narrow space. For example, a blind person, who has lost vision, can also generate empathy because in the perception process, not only vision is used to receive the objective environment, but also taste, hearing, smell, etc. Therefore, it can only be said that vision is one of the sources of empathy, and without this source, individuals can also achieve empathy through other perceptions. Scholars in various fields have gradually expanded their research vision in the continuous in - depth study of vision, extending the depth and breadth of vision both horizontally and vertically. Based on the previous research, this study will connect the cognitive process of things based on vision with the dissemination process of emotions. Explore the development process based on vision, from vision to awakening the emotions of cultural confidence and then to causing the national culture empathy of the group within the same cultural background. Consider how to achieve the maximum national culture empathy of the group from the perspective of visual design, broaden the social significance of visual design, and provide new thinking directions and action paths for designers' design practice in the future.

4.1 The Logical Process from Vision to the Generation of Emotions and Feelings

Human senses are divided into vision, hearing, smell, and so on. Humans obtain external information through senses, and this information is processed by the human brain to generate an overall understanding of things. Among them, vision is one of the important ways for humans to perceive the external environment. 80% of the external information obtained by humans comes from vision. Due to the importance of vision in receiving external information, the academic community has to conduct in-depth research on the term "visual perception". Thus, the principle of visual perception is a kind of perceptual psychology, divided into "visual" reception and "perception" feeling, also known as "Gestalt theory". The Gestalt theory conducts research based on "form", mainly emphasizing the integrity of the figure. The whole emphasized by the Gestalt principle is not a simple addition of each part, but a new perception presented by the whole. The information conveyed by the whole composed of the interaction of these parts is far greater than the sum of the parts^[3]. Under the action of the principle of visual perception, the visual center integrates and analyzes the fragmented visual information received by the eyes and reprocesses the information to form a basic understanding of things.

As early as the early 1960s, American psychologists Schachter and Singer proposed the theory of emotional attribution. To verify this theory, they conducted a series of experiments. The experimental results showed that people's cognition and understanding of physiological reactions determine the final emotional experience. In fact, the emotional state is affected by three factors,

namely the cognitive process (expectation), physiological state, and environmental factors. The stimulating factors in the environment input external information to the cerebral cortex through receptors; the physiological factors input information about changes in the physiological state to the brain through the activities of internal organs and skeletal muscles; the cognitive process is the recollection of past experiences and the assessment of the current situation. The information from these three aspects is integrated by the cerebral cortex to generate a certain emotional experience. It can be seen that the cognitive process is the key factor that determines the nature of emotions^[4].

So far, the experience of generating emotions and feelings from vision is also a process in which the visual information presented by external things generates personalized feelings through the individual's cognitive experience (Figure 1).

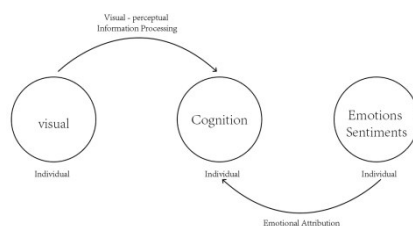


Figure 1 The Logical Process of the Generation of Emotions and Feelings from Vision

4.2 The Logical Process of the Generation of Empathy from Emotions and Feelings

Human society is inseparable from the interaction between people. During the process of people's interaction, information is continuously transmitted and exchanged through sharing and contagion mechanisms, thus creating a social network among people. The communication field has defined this phenomenon as interpersonal communication. It can be seen that in the daily operation of human society, the communication and transmission of emotions and feelings are constantly being realized, providing a good communication medium for the transmission of individual emotions and feelings. The formation process of empathy itself is a process of communication, interaction, and dissemination. Without communication, interaction, and dissemination, it is difficult to form empathy. However, "how to express empathy" has become an important issue. If two individuals do not speak the same language, the occurrence of empathy between them will be hindered. Similarly, if there are huge differences in cultural cognition between individuals, when it comes to empathy, the issue of cross-cultural empathetic communication must be considered.

When emotions achieve empathy in the group through sharing and infection, the cognition guided by such emotions will also come to dominate, manifested as the acceptance of information consistent with the emotions and the rejection of opposite information, producing the "cognitive spiral effect" expected by cognitive competitors, and causing widespread resonance through empathy between individuals.

It is worth mentioning that due to the characteristics of emotions, the empathy they trigger has relatively large limitations, such as short duration and limited space. Therefore, the content presented by the "props" in poster design must awaken collective emotions to the greatest extent possible in order to broaden the influence boundary and achieve the desired resonance among a larger number of people. Collective emotions are the unique emotions generated by each nation during its development process. They are continuously inherited with the help of factors such as culture and belief and have become the "bond" that links the entire nation. Therefore, considering the influence of posters in generating empathy, how to awaken the collective emotions of

individuals to achieve empathy in poster design is an issue that designers need to study^[5] (Figure 2).

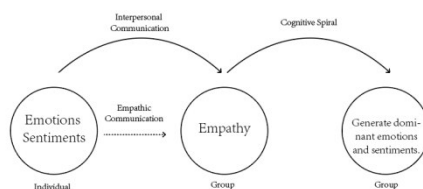


Figure 2 The Logical Process of the Generation of Empathy from Emotions and Feelings

Combined with the above two processes, from the perspective of poster design, it is to make the audience feel the ideas conveyed by the poster from the visual starting point, enabling the audience to form a basic understanding of their national culture, and then generate national emotions and feelings related to their own nation, such as cultural confidence and national pride. Through the logic of the interpersonal communication phenomenon in social operation, the national - emotional empathy between individuals and between individuals and groups is achieved. At this point, the poster, as a communication element, continuously outputs its own emotional value to the audience, and the individuals who have already felt the content of the poster continuously consolidate the emotions expressed by the poster in social communication. Cultural empathy among the people is achieved, further strengthening the national emotions of the masses (Figure 3).

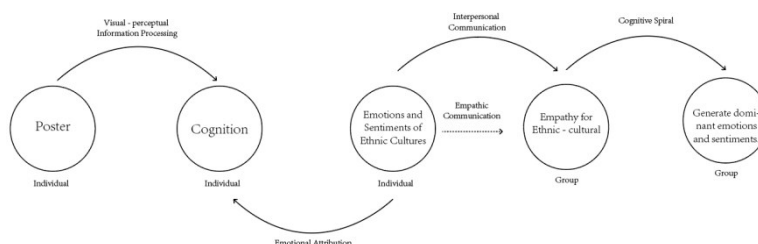


Figure 3 The Process of Poster-Induced "Empathy" of National Culture

5 Analysis of Poster Design Works in Awakening the "Empathy" of National Culture among the Masses

Chinese traditional philosophy is a multi-dimensional concept developed by the Chinese nation over thousands of years based on regional and temporal characteristics, regarding the relationships between people and people, people and nature, and people and themselves. It is a collection of excellent traditional Chinese culture, constituting the foundation for the survival of the Chinese nation and the driving force for its development. It has also had a profound impact on neighboring countries such as South Korea and Japan.

5.1 Observing "Tao Follows Nature" from Huang Hai's Posters

Huang Hai, a master of poster design praised by the BBC and Hollywood as "Chinese design is on

the rise", his film poster works can always convey the profound meaning of the films themselves and enable the audience to truly experience the Chinese essence hidden in the posters. In the film posters of "A Monk in a Floating World" and "Shadow" (Figure 4 and Figure 5), in terms of design expression, Huang Hai adopted the contrast between grandeur and tininess. Visually, he emphasized the vastness of the environment and the perseverance of the characters within it, highlighting the relationship between "people" and "nature". He illustrated the objective fact of a monk going down the mountain. By using the slanting-line composition and the unique technique of light and heavy ink in landscape painting, he created a strong sense of space, dividing the picture into three parts: "heaven", "people", and "earth". People stand between "heaven" and "earth", participating in the evolution of nature as a part of the natural world, fully expressing Taoist thoughts and the dialectical relationship between "people" and "nature" with a full sense of artistic conception. It expresses the characteristic of "Tao" as the order of all things. Moreover, the layout of the entire poster combines the virtual and the real, the dynamic and the static, with a prominent visual focus and a philosophical atmosphere. When the audience looks at the poster, the visual focus gradually falls on a certain part of the poster. Then, as the line of sight shifts to the layout of the entire work, the grand heaven and earth form a strong contrast with the tiny characters, highlighting the relationship between people and heaven, earth, and nature. At the same time, it guides the audience to consider the relationship between the overall visual elements of the poster, further guiding them to think about the dialectical relationship between "people" and "nature", thereby inspiring the audience's admiration for traditional culture and stimulating their national cultural confidence.

The term "Taiji" was first mentioned in "The Book of Changes - Xi Ci": "The Changes have Taiji, from which the Two Modes are born, the Two Modes give birth to the Four Images, and the Four Images give birth to the Eight Trigrams". It is a specialized term in Chinese traditional philosophy. Both the yin fish and the yang fish have the shape of a large head and a small tail, indicating the natural law of the growth and decay of things that never stops^[6]. Huang Hai is good at using the combination of design elements and composition to render the atmosphere of the poster, bringing a strong visual effect to the audience, and implicitly containing the essence of Chinese traditional philosophy, arousing the audience's thinking about their national culture, narrowing the distance between the audience and traditional philosophy, making the audience have a profound experience of national traditional culture, and then generating national cultural confidence.



Figure 4 Movie Poster of "A Monk in a Floating World"



Figure 5 Movie Poster of "Shadow"

5.2 Discovering "Harmony Begets Creativity" from Kan Tai-keung's Posters

Kan Tai-keung is undoubtedly a master figure in the field of graphic design. He has won more than 300 design awards. He is also the earliest designer in the Hong Kong design community to awaken "local consciousness". He highly advocates Chinese traditional culture and actively incorporates the imagery of excellent traditional Chinese philosophy into his design works. In his works, one can see the infinite creativity he extends from the simplest elements such as plants, stones, and water waves. Kan Tai-keung has sought out the creativity that belongs to the Chinese people from traditional culture.

In the design of the "At Ease" series of posters, he used handmade patterned paper to combine several ink-written Chinese characters such as "do", "walk", "eat", "sleep", and "play" with corresponding objective objects. "Walk" with shoes, "eat" with plants, "play" with tadpoles, etc., all reflect his carefree attitude towards life. It is the externalized form of a person's ease of mind, embodying the "inner self" in nature and expressing the ease within the "inner self". Through this, it not only reflects the harmonious ease between humans and nature but also the harmonious integration of the heart and nature.

The "At Ease" series of posters combines traditional and natural objects, placing inner feelings on the objects closely related to "do", "walk", "eat", "sleep", and "play" in life. Through capturing the visual attention of the audience, it evokes the audience's memories of "do", "walk", "eat", "sleep", and "play", allowing the audience to reminisce about the theme and generate a relevant sense of familiarity through visual effects (Figure 6).

In the poster design of "All Things Return to One - The Return of Macau", instead of creating a lively atmosphere, a simple composition and elements were used: a lotus petal falling on the ripples formed by ink wash. The petal of the lotus, the flower symbolizing the Macau Special Administrative Region, gently falls into the fret pattern formed by two "9"s, expressing the peaceful concept of tolerance with a serene attitude. It embodies the harmonious and unceasing way of flowers blooming and falling, and leaves returning to their roots. The designer used a simple expression language to make the audience's visual focus on the lotus and the "return". By using a Chinese-style expression method, the designer combined "All Things Return to One" and "return" on one object, taking a certain "material" from the cultural origin to imply the meaning of "harmony", constantly stimulating the audience's "local" emotions with visual objects to achieve the process of empathy between the audience and the designer (Figure 7).



Figure 6 The "At Ease" Series



Figure 7 The "All Things Return to One" Poster

5.3 Conveying the Concept of "Grand Unification" from Television Program Posters

For another example, the poster of an episode of the Hunan Satellite TV's music variety show "Infinite Sound" (Figure 8) had the theme of "Paying Tribute to Taiwan Music". The designer skillfully incorporated the feelings of both sides of the Taiwan Strait into the overall poster design. The main part of the picture was a record player. However, upon closer inspection, it could be found that the golden border in the upper left corner echoed the coastline of China's southeast coast. The two sides of the Taiwan Strait were connected by musical notes, and the map of Taiwan Province was depicted as a piece of Chinese medicinal herb "Danggui" (Angelica sinensis), aiming to imply the meaning of "should return" and pray for the realization of "returning". The creative idea of this poster design was based on the homophonic of "Danggui". Danggui is a kind of medicinal material in traditional Chinese medicine. By combining the outline of Taiwan Province with Danggui, through this piece of "Danggui", it conveyed the irresistible trend of the times and the will of the people.



Figure 8 Poster of the music variety show "Infinite Sound"

When the poster design awakens people's national cultural emotions, the interpersonal communication in real life provides the basic medium for the spread of emotions and feelings. Nowadays, with the popularization of information and the Internet, a more convenient space has been provided for people's information dissemination and communication. The popularization of the Internet enables people to share and communicate information anytime and anywhere. Through the network, people can communicate with others in real time and hear more voices. In the Internet era, the information-conveying attribute of posters has its "effectiveness" magnified. People can spread and discuss their viewpoints "at zero cost" through the network. The empathy of emotions and feelings is no longer limited to reality. The national emotions conveyed by posters can trigger the maximum empathy on the social level through the network.

6 Key Considerations for Poster Design to Inspire National Cultural Empathy

6.1 In - depth Understanding and Empathizing with the Audience First

Excellent design is not simply novel or eye - catching design. Instead, it is when the designer truly understands the audience and the work can connect with the audience's emotions, making the audience have a deep sense of empathy. The experience process of the designer and the audience for the design project is opposite. According to the design thinking model proposed by the Hasso Plattner Design School at Stanford University, design is divided into five development stages: empathy, definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing. Empathy is the foundation among the five stages. Designers must first empathize with certain emotions and feelings of the audience and understand the factors that can truly move the audience based on certain emotions and feelings, and then proceed with design ideation and prototype design.

Based on this logical relationship, for posters that arouse national cultural empathy, designers must firmly grasp the national emotions of the audience, define the design problem in the direction of these emotions, then ideate and create design prototypes, and after the design testing stage, the design is finally realized.

6.2 Finding Appropriate Props to Trigger Individual Emotions

During the ideation process, designers need to indirectly transform national emotions into certain "props" or cultural symbols and use these "props" or cultural symbols to construct the poster image. When the audience sees these "props" or cultural symbols, they can generate the emotions that the designer experienced at the beginning of the design. What are "props"? "Props" are the "graphics", "text", "colors", and "layout" that constitute the poster. Taking Mr. Kan Tai - keung's "All Things Return to One - The Return of Macau" poster design as an example, the lotus petal in the picture, the overlapping "9"s written in calligraphy, the refined copywriting, composition, and layout, and the simple color scheme are all the "props" that constitute this poster. However, these props have deeper meanings. The two overlapping "9"s represent return, and the lotus represents the flower of the Macau Special Administrative Region. Even the position where the lotus petal falls is endowed with the meaning of all things returning to one. Therefore, in the selection and combination of "props", designers still need to strengthen their national awareness and continuously enhance the atmosphere and emotional sense of the work to move people's hearts.

6.3 Creative Thinking to Highlight the Props

In the combination of "props" or cultural symbols, creativity must also be added to improve the

memorability of the poster.

Mr. Kan Tai - keung once said, "Creativity is the most important thing in design."^[7] Paul Rand also said, "Without creativity, there is no design." Poster design is no exception. Creativity is a unique and creative idea. Good creativity can effectively and systematically convey the designer's intention, move the audience, make the audience have passion and association, and make the audience remember deeply. Creativity first comes from life. As long as one is good at observing the details in life, new ideas will be generated. Creativity also comes from culture. "Culture" is a vast concept that permeates all aspects of life. The culture that designers receive can become potential creative inspiration. Creativity also comes from many other aspects. Finally, creativity is put into practice. When designers obtain a creative idea from objective aspects such as "life and culture", if it only stays at the concept level, the creativity will never be realized.

7 Conclusion

With the intensification of conflicts and the increasingly complex situation in the international situation, in order to strengthen the sense of community of the Chinese nation, exploring the modern presentation of excellent traditional Chinese culture has become an inevitable choice to promote the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Only when the Chinese nation unites as one can it gather strength and stimulate the inexhaustible driving force for the Chinese nation to move forward bravely. For designers, how to better innovate and actively apply excellent traditional Chinese culture in poster design, make traditional culture radiate new vitality, and play a key role in the current people's perception is not limited to completing a poster. More consideration should be given to the social impact effect of the poster. Therefore, designers must clearly understand the generation logic of individuals from vision to emotion, and even consider the social influence of the poster to cause a large - scale empathy among social groups. In this process, innovative thinking about the modern utilization of traditional culture should be carried out. With the powerful media effect of posters, strong output of soft power should be implemented to subtly construct and consolidate people's cultural and philosophical foundation in life.

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