Design Education Corresponds Social Responsibility—Regarding to the Social Responsibility of Brand Identity Design

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Abstract. Design as a visual communication method carries the responsibility of transforming ideas and concepts into tangible products or visual contents. In a world of mass media and over-consumption, design plays a vital role in people's daily life without they noticed. Everything is delicate constructed, from the supermarket ice-cream shelves to the latest iPhone X, all designed to pass on message and ultimately generate maximum profits. Thus, design, in general, has carried the social responsibility that not been primarily discussed, especially regarding design education. In this essay, we are going to explore the relationship between design education and its social responsibility, and how design can change brand identity and its influences on customers.

Introduction

Design brings values, taste, style, and lifestyle concept to a brand identity, which simultaneously change the way how people lives and enhance brand value through the process. Its unique charm is that design does not only provides consumers with utility but also helps consumers to find spiritual ownerships, emotional satisfactions, and pleasure. It creates an ideal lifestyle and exceptional experiences for its users. Therefore, from the perspective of consumers, design is what makes them willing to pay the value premium. As design becomes an essential element in brand value, design social responsibility becomes the way to realize the vision of brand value enhancement.

The social responsibility that design carries is the purpose and motivation of design education. As stated in Designing Design by Kenya Hara, "Design has no motive for self-expression. Its purpose is to focus more on society. It is the essence of design to solve the common problems faced by most people in society. The process of problem-solving—also the process that generates the value and spirit that people can all share, is the most attractive feature of design. [1]" The key to design is problem-solving, and along the process of transforming ideas into tangible products, or as Buchanan puts it the "bridge between theory and the way we live our lives. [2]" Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is when business improves their profits, protect and increase social welfare responsibilities at the same time [3]. In Wood’s theory of CSR, he pointed out that a principle of CSR is legitimacy, that corporations are subject to social moralities, ethics and values [4]. Company who does not follow this principle, such as Nike’s sweat blood shop or Volkswagen emissions scandal, would suffer greatly from the corporate social responsibility, lead to damage on brand value and all the products associate with the brand [5]. Specific to the brand design, the connotation of social responsibility includes environmental protection, support for charitable causes, donate to social contributions, ensure the design of goodwill, and contribute to human life forms. There has been study proves that a positive brand image, will change people’s perception on the brand and ultimately elevate the brand image.

Good-will Design—Focus on Social Responsibility and Morality

As brand utilize design strategy to improve brand value, brand should also pay attention to its social responsibility, from the perspective of goodwill and morality to examine the relationship between people and objects. The design which genuinely solicitude for the public does not only
need to carry out of moral responsibility but also contain with delicate understanding and considerate, which results in providing consumers with equality and convenience.

The "control" that design has on users is an ethical issue that should be addressed. As Hang mentioned in Design Road, "The most striking aspect of the control that design has on people is that: design is the most effective way to promote consumption and to trigger purchase desire. We can all share similar experiences in the supermarket: we all plan to buy few items when we enter the supermarket and exit the supermarket with a shopping cart full of commodities. From merchandise packaging to commodity display, all goods are designed to generate sales. People often have involuntary feelings when they enter the supermarket, and constantly 'find out' their own needs as they are continuously walking through aisles. Design can arouse the hidden purchase desire and make it dominant. In other words, design discovers purchase needs and creates consumer needs. Contemporary advertising linguistics believe that there is no such thing as so-called 'natural' and 'physiological' need at all, need is created by external things; therefore, it is social. [6]"

With the rapid development of scientific technology, design has already eliminated many "impossibilities" we used to believe. During the creative process of design, what is involved in the relationship between ethics and morality? Regarding ethical design, the most basic question is "what kind of mode of design is advisable or beneficial." Ethical values are embodied in two aspects, the first one is on the responsibility level and the second is on the aesthetic level. At the responsibility level, an ethical design should always insist that design return to its original responsibility, which is providing a design that has a positive influence on life.

The value of design is not to blindly give people a "free" life, but to treat it critically. The value of design lies between the value of science and technology and the value of art and culture. It is critical to know how to handle the position of design in between. For fashion design, the ethics on the aesthetic level may attract more attention and face more challenges. Now, numerous popularity-oriented fashion design focuses solely on the external characterization, advocating for vanity and unhealthy lifestyles, which runs counter to the design purpose. An ethical design is to produce a suitable product that fulfills the needs of people's ideal healthy lifestyle and improve their quality of life. From the aspect of brand identity, establish an ecological brand concept is an embodiment of the ethical design. The ecological brand concept requires brands to incorporate green materials into the primary design element. This will not only enhance the value of the design but also improve the brand image. Although a designer may be subject to commercial interests or marketing necessity, he must be aware that his design is socially responsible. The designer's morality is also part of the design value. At present, the concept of moral design in China is rarely discussed and has not been taken seriously by the design community. Brand image design could be interpreted as the "first impression" and the frontier of brands, have the responsibility to undertake ethical design.

**Harmonious Design - Balance, Gentle, Rational Spirit**

Design born from art has lingered emotional elements in its roots. Most people think that design is visual, psychological, emotional sustenance and freedom, but the design is also born in science and technology, with absolute rationality, logic, and practicality. Now, design has a close connection with economic values, and its creation complexity has up to the next level. How to deal with these characteristics? Is to use an artsy and emotional expression to convey concepts, to use emotional forms to illustrate theories, or to use scientific logic to transform ideas? In fact, design needs to have both emotional and rational creativity.

This is a fast-moving era, with too many instabilities, and too many blind and impulsive. Every single day, our emotional world goes up and down, and our perceptual experience is being challenged all the time. We feel impetuous and anxious when the world hit the "Refresh" bottom every day. The overly intense speed of life destroys our original perceptual framework; thus, we sometimes feel overwhelmed even dazed. Under this environment, it is commendable to preserve a sense of reason and rationality. Design currently acts as a linkage between the spiritual and cultural consumption carries the mission of bringing balance into people's day to day life. We do not need
overly radical design and blindly exaggerated design, nor need conventional and non-innovative
design.

In the process of design, designers need to use the dialectical thinking to perform a rational
analysis. Bring creative concept into the expression of form, and through this process, the product
could represent this era of time. The analysis and reprocessing of material should be treated
separately; otherwise, it will generate low-end or biased design. The primary purpose of
customer-oriented design is to create quality-of-life. This requires brands to collect lifestyle
information and use perceptual materials during the design process. If any material makes us feel
uncomfortable and anxious, it will be difficult for designers to complete a good design. Processing
materials are the key. Designers should make reasonable choices, develop what is useful and discard
what is not, remodeling materials, which is the basis of harmonious design. A successful material
analysis is particularly important for the perceptual and rational balance. Design, the process of
creation, need passion and sensibility. For designers, it is demanding. Designers not only have to
create from scratch, but also must reflect on their design and learn from it. Through repeated
reflection, and numerous tests, the design product will be suitable for its customer.

The concept of harmonious design is to seek the balance between the emotional and rational
value of design, which is the quality spirit that brand identity designers and designers, in general,
must have.

**Design Responsibility-Creating Charitable Brand Image**

**Investment for Public Welfare.** Through the establishment of the charitable brand image, brands
can establish an emotional connection with its customer. In a recent research conducted by Chernev
and Blair, they discovered that, “acts of social goodwill—even when they are unrelated to the
company’s core business, as in the case of charitable giving—can alter product perceptions, such
that products of companies engaged in pro-social activities are perceived as performing better. [7]”
Other study indicated that corporate ethical responsible behavior help enhance the brand image
perceived by customer better than a simple symbol logo [8]. Therefore, charitable giving, in any
realm, can have a positive influence on brand image and thus boost the company’s business.

Innovation and classic is Cartier's brand spirit and active participation in charity work is Cartier's
external brand image. On June 8, 2007, the Rockefeller Center, a landmark in Manhattan, was
illuminated by the smile of 250 New Yorkers. This was a giant mosaic image of 50 stories high and
was projected by 12 projection lamps, named "The Smile Monument." The monumental image was
specially commissioned by French artist Agnes Winter for the "Day of Love," a day celebrating
Cartier's work in advocating fraternity and promoting charity. This giant installation piece was
constituted of 400 portraits of people smiling from all over the world. From an 80-year-old
white-haired man to a Puerto-Rican with his headphones on, to adorable babies with dark eyes, blue
eyes, and green eyes. Through showcase the smile of people in different stages of life and of people
from different regions, "The Smile Monument" pass on a message about love, passion, and dreams,
which are the qualities that Cartier cares about.

In the age of information, any brand's action, can and will affect its image in the public mind.
Gained public affection or not, it is related to whether they can build a relationship of mutual
dependence and identity. Brand identity is the key to customer relationships. No consumer wants to
establish an emotional connection with brands that do not have a sense of morality, responsibility,
and taste. The brand identity as a symbol, as Ferdinand de Saussure puts it, stands for the signifier
and the signifier itself. Here, "signifier" is given the concept of emotion, and "signified" is given the
concept of content. Consumers have reached a state of emotional sharing with brand identity. From
the most basic form of affection, that is, love the style, color, fabric texture, to the product itself, to
the exterior forms of self-worth exhibit, that is, the exhibit of customer's status, cultural, personality
style, which all gradually form a sense of emotional dependence from identity to loyalty.

**Sustainable Design.** Sustainable design is a healthy and responsible way of living and design.
Sustainable design should be designers' mindset, instead of brands' marketing stunt. "Sustainable
design," include brand design value, is an important design concept originate from western
architecture design movement. Its core concept is to eliminate the negative impact on the surrounding environment and to maintain its ecological balance. Design, as an action of activity, is a people-centered behavior. It is deeply involved in the surrounding ecosystem. Design is about people, the surrounding environment, and all the materials, technologies and energy they bring. Hang in the Design Road put forward the concept of "design chain," a current interpretation of sustainable design. The contemporary design is to create a sense of interdependence between people and nature, between people, to maintain a balance and to construct an interactive mechanism.

On the other hand, the reality of scarcity of materials also pushes designers to take the approach of sustainable design. Especially in the industrial design segment, many high-tech industries have been facing scarcity on many critical element, and rising up demand, which mind result in volatility on prices and geopolitical conflicts. Designers might be able to design products with longer service life, and higher recycle prospective, imposing a more sustainable lifestyle to their users [9].

As the main body of implementation in sustainable design, people should maintain their sustainable mentality. Similar to the ecology system, we have a delicate health system which can be easily affected by mood swing and external environmental change. The new design concept should emphasize on nurturing people's mental health and spiritual cultivation, fulfill the need of respect, cognition, belonging, aesthetic, and self-realization.

From Environmentally Friendly Products to The Eco-Friendly Mind. Designer clothing with environmental protection concept will have an impact on consumers' environmental awareness. Here the "environmental awareness" has two layers of meanings. The first layer, through utilizes environmentally friendly materials, technology, and production process, bring the green design concept attached to the brand identity. When customers wear their favorite brand of clothes, it means that they agree with the brand's environmentally friendly philosophy, and their environmental awareness qualities are improved simultaneously. At this level, the manifestation of sustainable design shifts to ecological awareness, as well as an embodiment of the design itself with educational functions. The second layer is a broad aspect of environmental protection, which utilize green design to effect on one's mindset and reshape his inner world. This requires thoughtful design, which does bring not only visual pleasure but also brings psychological satisfaction and happiness. This is a manifestation of design's healing functions, which many brands aspire to achieve.

Create A Sustainable Design Strategy with The Concept Of "Zero Waste". Lauder, a Chinese-born young man who graduated from the Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design in London, put forward the concept of "Zero Waste Fashion," which became a popular topic at Fashion Week. Liu Mark invented a new "jigsaw cut" method, to avoid the usual cutting waste from sleeve pieces and collar pieces. He used this unique tailoring technology and designed a serrated style series. In this series, each piece is made of cotton cloth with jagged edges and stitched together; the entire series did not waste an inch of material. Dresses made from the "jigsaw cut" method did not showcase any outdated taste. Instead, dresses appeared to have decent fashion style. This, of course, depends on the designer's unique senses in fashion and fabric use. In the "zero waste of fashion," Liu Mark expressed his "sustainable development" concept. He said: "When designing a fashion series, often 15% of the fabric is wasted. Now everyone is concerned about the global environment, we fashion designers should do their utmost to reduce waste." He said: "People is a part of nature, and cannot change the laws of nature, only conform to nature. Customer's work should also try to avoid undermining the ecological balance; fashion designers should do their utmost to reduce waste [10]." Maximum use of materials is a Zero-waste design is dedicated to reducing the number of rags in the cutting process so that millions of tons of rubbish can be reduced each year. 15% -20% of the fabrics used to make garments each year eventually end up in landfills, because throwing them out cost less than recycling.

This zero-waste garment practice, the key lies in the reform of the garment cutting method, the basic design of the basic style of some of the design changes, their concept began to affect the mainstream fashion industry. "Zero waste" is not a new technology or a new material, but a new design concept. This concept can drive designers to design what works out of the available technology. (Figure 1 and Figure 2)
Figure 1. Illustrate How “Zero Waste” Garment Can be Achieved through Assembly Wasted Fragments of Fabrics.

Figure 2. Illustrate How “Zero Waste” Garment Can be Achieved with One-piece Fabric without Any Waste Pieces, the Excess Fabrics are Used as Garment Decorations.

Conclusion

Brand value is the essence of a brand, and infiltrates in the entire process of brand management, from design, culture, style to marketing management. Brand image design and its social responsibility is an important channel to enhance brand value. Therefore, a brand competition is a competition of brand image value and its influences, and also a contest for brand social images.

The lack of ecological value is the current problem Chinese brands need to overcome. In China, the design industry has already been developed for decades. The waste brought from the extensive model of development in the initial phase of the industry, the massive scale of "design and development" form companies and factories, the waste of material at the beginning phase of design, the waste of human resources, repeated pollution; all of above are environmental problems that companies and the society need to face together. This lets us embark on a design path featuring green materials and sustainable manufacture and undertake the social responsibility of design. Design education is the way to provide social responsibility.

Of course, design's social responsibility is not only to refine historic past but also forecasting the future. In the future, human life will be centered by elements such as green ecology, nature, intelligent technology and harmonious emotion. Therefore, the strategy of a brand image should include green design strategy, emotional expression design strategy, high-tech design strategy, People-oriented design strategy, personalized design strategy; these are all closely linked with the development trend of human life in the future. Design will be closer to life, fulfill people's emotional needs, becomes a path of self-expression, and realize brand value. I believe that is also the mission and responsibility of design education.
Reference


