

MAKING TRADITIONAL TRENDING: THE STUDY ON FAMILIARITY AND LIKINGS IN PROMOTING CULTURAL AWARENESS

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ABSTRACT

Recently, some countries are fast losing their cultural identity. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to increase the recognition of people in their national culture through the influence of digital product design. This was done through the study on familiarity and likings towards digital products and the Chinese cultural elements. This research includes proposing representative cultural elements and potential digital products through literature review, and obtaining the application rules of Chinese traditional cultural elements in digital product design via a quantitative survey. The results show that respondents prefer simple monochromatic Chinese cultural elements, and the application percentage to the product is suggested between 10% - 30%. At the same time, there is a positive correlation between the familiarity and liking data, the right combination of cultural elements in products have proven to improve people's liking for these products while it increased their cultural recognition. Therefore, this study leads toward improving modern people's acceptance of traditional culture and protecting national culture. In addition, it shows the design rule of integrating traditional culture into modern product design for designers.

Keywords: Cultural awareness, traditional culture, design, digital product, familiarity and liking

1. INTRODUCTION

In the development of cultural diversification throughout the world, it is important to represent the characteristics of the national cultural of each country. According to Zhang and Cheng (2015), in China, although the government try to preserve traditional culture, Chinese people are still not very interested in their native culture. This has led to the decline of their traditional native culture. Therefore, it is crucial to make efforts to improve people's recognition of traditional culture. Nowadays, digital products are a necessity in people's life. The study by Wu and Ying (2016), pointed out that the digital product closest to consumers' daily life would be digital watches. Therefore, this study makes use of the advantages of digital watches to improve the Chinese people's cultural awareness.

However, the balance between traditional culture and modern feature is a problem. Based on the theoretical references by Leder (2001) and Miao (2015), people appreciate what they like and people like what they are familiar with. Therefore, this research hypothesized that the increase of likes will improve appreciation and awareness of the Chinese people towards their product and cultural element. This study analyzed the relationship between familiarity and liking to the cultural components and digital product. As a result, the Chinese people's recognition of their own culture through the combination of modern digital products and traditional culture would improve tremendously.

2. FAMILIARITY AND LIKING

Research by Jones et. al. (2011) had firmly established that familiarity has a positive attitude towards the stimuli of various judgment. Familiar objects are the preferred objects. The results showed that familiarity has a direct effect on the behavior of people in approaching and avoiding things. Therefore, this research strongly believes that familiarity can influence people's liking and buying behavior while, simultaneously, it also provided a reference for the method of this research.

In addition, many papers have studied the relationship between Chinese values and consumer behavior, and proposed the need to strengthen people's understanding of their own culture (Pan, 2009; Miao, 2015). Miao (2015) mentioned that people have a sense of identity with the local culture and they like culture that they are familiar with. Therefore, the degree of familiarity and the degree of liking are the key issues that needs to be studied in this research. However, none of the research before has ever used the understanding of familiarity and liking on product design in order to improve the cultural awareness. Based on that motivation, this research suggested the study of familiarity and likings in helping to enhance cultural awareness of Chinese people.

3. METHOD

Two surveys were conducted in this study. Based on the related literatures (Wang, 2016; Klein & Gomes, 2016; Nan, 2018), number of participants taking part in the similar study were usually less than 300 people. This present research recorded 495 participations among the Chinese ranging from different ages, genders, education and originated from all over the country. The first survey was to verify the favorite digital products, and the most familiar and favorite cultural element categories for Chinese people. The second survey was to test the awareness of Chinese people for their own cultural content, as well as to verify the application rules of traditional cultural elements through the digital products obtained from the first survey.

3.1 Survey 1: The Components of Chinese Traditional Culture in Digital Products

The purpose of this survey is to analyze the types of Chinese traditional culture elements that are applicable with digital product design. This research acknowledged that Chinese porcelain design is a representative of Chinese culture to the world (Li & Shen, 2017; Xiao, 2018; Ren & Yao, 2018). Therefore, this study divided the porcelain cultural elements of the Yongzheng period into six categories: pattern, color, nature, palace, human, and animal.

Respondents had to choose their preferred types of traditional cultural element and their application preferences for digital products and cultural elements.

- i. **Participant.** 88 respondents had participated. Small number of samples were used because it was conducted to evidence the literature findings about the Chinese people's preference on culture and digital products. The age of respondents was between 18 and under to 50 and above. 19-29 years old (54.55%), female (57.95%), bachelor's degree holders (48.86%).
- ii. **Stimuli.** For further exploration, the research has categorized the Chinese traditional elements into six categories (color, pattern, nature, human, animal and palace). Each category was presented by five images of cultural patterns. In total 30 images stimuli were produced, and they were presented in a form of questionnaire.
- iii. **Procedure.** In order to reach to the participant, the questionnaire was uploaded to the online survey tool named Sojump. It was divided into three parts; the first part is to get the demographic inputs of participant, and in the second part participant were shown images of cultural patterns representing the six categories of traditional elements. Using 5-points Likert scales, participant was asked to rate the familiarity and liking according to their own experiences (1 is Absolutely disagree, 5 is Absolutely agree). In the third part, 5-point Likert scales was also used to rate a series of digital product images based on participant experiences and preferences.

3.2 Survey 2: Keeping the Balance between Traditional Culture and Modern Style with the Awareness on Chinese Traditional Culture

In order to find the appropriate balance for the combination of Chinese traditional elements and modern digital device, and to verify whether the implantation of traditional cultural elements in modern products can improve the cultural awareness of Chinese people. According to the result of Survey 1, the digital smart watch was selected as the base product for Survey 2. Moreover, the result of Survey 1 also stated that the design style of the digital smart watch with Chinese cultural elements should be gentle, simple and conforms to the implicit Chinese cultural background. Thus, in Survey 2, 10 digital smart watches (same base products) were combined with 10 design layouts of selected cultural elements gradually and were presented as a tested stimuli in the form of images.

- i. **Participant.** 407 respondents participated for this survey. The age of respondents was between 18 and under to 50 and above. Out of that, 19-29 years old (45.95%), female(60.93%)and Bachelor-degree holders (51.84%).

- ii. **Stimuli.** Ten images of the selected product composed of different perspectives and angles are gradually merged with elements of the palace category, where the pattern layout ratio ranged from 10% - 20%, 20% - 30%, 30% - 40%, 40% - 50% to 50% - 60% on the product surface. It was then divided into two groups, as per Figure 1. Group 1 presented cultural elements with modern single color, while Group 2 used traditional colorful elements. In total 10 images stimuli were produced and they were presented in a form of questionnaire.
- iii. **Procedures.** The questionnaire for survey 2 was divided into two parts. The first part is demographics question. In the second part participant was asked to rate ten images of the combination of digital watches and selected cultural elements. The questionnaire was uploaded to the online survey tool named Sojump. Using 5 points Likert-scale, (1 is Absolutely disagree, 5 is Absolutely agree), respondents must rate each of the digital watch images according to four assessment criteria, liking composition, appropriate combination, culture familiarity and culture association based on their experiences.



Figure 1. 10 Digital watches with traditional Chinese cultural elements

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Survey 1

In survey 1, descriptive analysis and correlation analysis were used to analyze 88 samples. The result shows the respondents' feedback on six traditional Chinese cultural elements (nature, people, colors, patterns, animals and palaces). Descriptive analysis of the evaluation shows that the most familiar traditional elements to the respondents are palace elements. The pattern elements are the least. Meanwhile, the favorite traditional elements to the respondents are palace elements, while the pattern element is the least preferred.

Correlation analysis conducted on the data shows a strong positive correlation between liking and familiarity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the increase in familiarity is related to the liking for the elements. Moreover, most of the respondents (96.59%) owned a digital product where 36.36% of them had the constancy of using a digital product for every five minutes. In addition, the respondents were also asked about their preference regarding the combination of traditional culture element and a digital product. Out of (4) styles, simple was the most preferable (81.82%) style for the combination. Furthermore, most of the respondents are interested in their traditional culture and have a certain understanding.

According to the analysis, if the people are familiar with any of the traditional culture element, they will like it more and tend to know more about it. It matched the finding by (Bornstein,1989; Hansen & wänke, 2009; Montoya et. al., 2017) claiming that people will prefer items they are familiar with. Therefore, the combination between modern products with a cultural element that people liked are beneficial in improving their liking and understanding for their own culture.

4.2 Survey 2.

In Survey 2, descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data for Liking Composition. The highest rating came from the digital smart watch with 20% - 30% and 50% - 60% cultural element implantation in Group 1. However, the lowest rating among the Chinese people was given to the digital smart watch with 50% - 60% cultural element implantation in Group 2. For Appropriate Combination, the highest rating came from the digital smart watch with 50% - 60% cultural element implantation in Group1. However, the lowest rating among the Chinese people was given to the digital smart watch with 10% - 20% cultural element implantation in Group2.

Culture Familiarity received the highest rating from the digital smart watch with 50% - 60% cultural element implantation in Group1. However, the lowest rating among the Chinese people was given to the digital smart watch with 10% - 20% cultural element implantation in Group2.

For Culture Association, the highest rating came from the digital smart watch with 50% - 60% cultural element implantation in Group1. However, the lowest rating among the Chinese people was given to the digital smart watch with 10% - 20% cultural element implantation in Group2.

4.3 Influence on Appropriate Combination and Culture Association

In order to verify the effect of culture familiarity and liking composition on appropriate combination, the One-Way ANOVA analysis was conducted. The purpose for this analysis is to identify the appropriate combination through the assessment of liking composition and culture familiarity. This is to verify the research theoretical reference saying that the Chinese people will appreciate what they liked. The results from the analysis also discovered that, all combination samples from both groups had a significant ($p < 0.05$) for liking composition and culture familiarity. This indicates that each of the combination sample have a significant impact on liking composition and culture familiarity.

In order to verify the effect of culture familiarity and liking composition on culture association, the One-Way ANOVA analysis was again conducted. The purpose of this analysis is to verify whether the degree of cultural association can be improved through liking composition and cultural familiarity or not. Findings from the analysis showed that culture familiarity and liking composition of different culture association samples in both groups showed a significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that there are differences in culture familiarity and liking composition of different culture association samples. Therefore, culture association did have a significant impact on liking composition and culture familiarity.

Findings from the data analysis in Group 1 showed that respondents are very pleased to have a product designed with the application of cultural element in a very simple style with fully conscious of its cultural integrity. Research by Geng (2018) and Lyu and Zhang (2018), The traditional pattern design on porcelain usually expresses a meaning. In the design, it may be a complete picture or a group of related elements, which is called cultural integrity. Meanwhile, results analysis for the traditional colored elements in Group 2 described that respondent preferred the smart watch design with cultural

completeness. This referred to the digital smart watch with the composition of traditional cultural elements ranged between 40% - 50%. The result also shows that people disliked full classic decoration.

In addition, the respondents believed that a digital smart watch with a familiar cultural element composition, brings a higher degree of cultural association. It means that, the more cultural elements are in the product, the more likely respondents associate it with the culture and gain more understanding from it. Finally, by utilizing the One-way ANOVA again, the research analyzed the influence of the appropriate cultural element and product combination by liking composition and culture familiarity from two groups of data. The high significant effect in the liking composition and culture familiarity among the appropriate combinations explained that appropriate combination between the product and the cultural element can be obtained by using elements that people like and are familiar with.

Furthermore, the analysis of affect was also carried out on culture association by culture familiarity and liking composition of two groups of data. Based on the data, culture association showed a significant effect in liking composition and culture familiarity. This proved that in order to get high culture association in products, designs should implant the composition of cultural element that people like and are familiar with. This supported the research hypothesis suggesting that, cultural awareness among Chinese people can be improved through the improvement of cultural association.

5. CONCLUSION

The paper presents the process of improving people's cultural awareness through the combination of traditional culture and modern digital products (China as the example). This study obtains six representative traditional cultural elements and digital products which are closed with people's life through literature review. Through the quantitative analysis of survey I, the suitable digital product design, people's favorite traditional cultural elements and styles are obtained. Then, in survey 2, the appropriate cultural elements and products are combined to rate by respondents. According to statistics and data analysis, the combination of suitable cultural elements and digital products makes people not only prefer products, but also have a higher recognition of cultural elements. It means that by designing new products with their favorite cultural features, people can better understand their own culture. Finally, the study proves that the combination of digital products and cultural elements does improve Chinese people's understanding of Traditional Chinese culture. Furthermore, the fusion of modern products and traditional

culture has the potential to create a new perception to the product design, it not only takes the cultural element to another level in modern style designs, but is also capable to create new product design styles.

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