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A Study and Practice of Regional Brand Image Design from a Local Cultural Perspective——A Case Study of the "Cha Le Di" Brand in Jining, Shandong

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Abstract:
This study takes the "Cha Le Di" brand from Jining, Shandong Province, known as the "Hometown of Confucius and Mencius," as its research object. From a local cultural perspective, it explores the practical pathways for regional brand image design. Taking Jining's profound Confucian cultural heritage as the design entry point, the study meticulously identifies and refines representative cultural symbols such as the Confucius bowing gesture, traditional ritual music and dance spirit, and Lu brocade patterns. Through innovative transformation and systematic design integration, the study creates a brand visual identity that combines regional characteristics with modern aesthetic features, thereby enhancing brand value and contributing to regional economic development. This research provides designers with a reference case and valuable experience for constructing localized regional brand images.

Keywords:
local culture; regional brand; brand image design;

Introduction

In the context of economic globalization and intensifying regional competition, integrating local culture into regional brand image design has become an important means to promote the design and marketing of daily consumer products, enhance regional economic competitiveness, and achieve sustainable development. Local culture refers to the time-honored, distinctive cultural traditions that have been passed down and continue to play a role in a specific region. It embodies the region's unique historical memory, lifestyle, customs, and value systems. A regional brand is a comprehensive brand with recognition and reputation that is formed based on regional culture and distinctive products. It serves as the unique characteristic and symbol that distinguishes a region from others. Michael Porter, the "father of competitive strategy," pointed out: "Regional brands are the products of regional economic development. They are a type of 'quasi-public good' that collectively promotes the development of enterprises in the region." [1] As the birthplace of Confucius and Mencius and the cradle of Confucian culture, Jining, Shandong, possesses abundant local cultural resources. The "Cha Le Di" brand, as a regional brand of Jining, integrates local culture into its brand development. This not

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only endows the brand with profound cultural and historical heritage and enhances its value but also provides a practical case study for the dissemination of China's excellent traditional culture.

1. Research Value of Local Culture and Regional Brands

1.1 The Deep-rooted Heritage of Local Culture

Local culture refers to the totality of material and spiritual civilization created and passed down by local residents over extended periods of production and daily life within a specific geographical area. It encompasses various aspects such as local history, folk customs, traditional crafts, literature and art, dialects, cuisine, natural landscapes, and religious beliefs. These elements collectively form the cultural genes that distinguish a region from others, embodying the lifestyle, value systems, and aesthetic preferences of its people. The rich cultural heritage of local culture provides abundant cultural materials and sources of inspiration for regional brand image design, offering unique and irreplaceable resources that enhance brand recognition and cultural appeal.

1.2 The Distinctive Characteristics of Regional Brands

The distinctive characteristics of regional brands are the key to their success in market competition. They are not only the products of regional economic development but also the concentrated expression of regional culture, possessing distinct characteristics.

The distinctive characteristics of regional brands are manifested in their close connection with regional resources. Different regions possess unique natural resources, climatic conditions, and abundant local products, which serve as the material foundation for the formation of regional brands. For example, Jining in Shandong Province is located in the southwestern part of Shandong, with a mild climate and fertile soil, endowed with abundant tea resources. As the birthplace of tea, China has a history of tea cultivation spanning over four thousand years, fostering a profound tea culture. From the Tang Dynasty's "Tea Classic" to the Song Dynasty's tea ceremony, and then to the prosperous tea trade during the Ming and Qing Dynasties, tea culture has long been integrated into the daily lives of the Chinese people, becoming an important symbol of Chinese civilization. Tea serves as a cultural carrier and embodies multiple connotations such as tea ceremony, tea art, and tea etiquette. In China's traditional culture of etiquette, the customs of using tea to make friends and entertain guests have formed a unique system of tea-drinking etiquette. The "Tea Joy Emperor" brand was born out of Jining's tea resources, with its brand essence closely tied to the city's tea cultivation, processing history, and techniques. The "Tea Joy Emperor" brand is rooted in this unique natural endowment, building a brand value system centered on "tea as a means of friendship," which is both regionally distinctive and rich in meaning.

1.3 Regional Brand Design and Creativity

Design creativity is composed of two parts: design and creativity. It is the process and outcome of using creative design methods, thinking patterns, and conceptual systems to visually express, interpret the essence of, and innovatively expand upon the design object. This includes graphic creativity, graphic design cre-

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ativity, industrial design creativity, environmental art design creativity, and digital media design creativity. Regional brand design creativity involves organically integrating local culture with brand imagery to create a distinctive brand image with a strong personality and cultural depth through unique visual graphics. This is an important means of enhancing the competitiveness of regional brands.

2. Analysis of the "Tea Emperor" Regional Brand Image Design

2.1 Positioning of the "Tea Joy Emperor" Regional Brand Image Design

2.1.1 Cultural Positioning

Rooted in local cultural resources, the design constructs a brand narrative system. As an important component of a region, city, or nation's external communication and promotion, regional brands bear the mission of "telling China's story through local narratives." The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized: "Culture concerns the foundation and destiny of a nation; when culture thrives, the nation prospers; when culture is strong, the nation is powerful. In the current world, the century-old changes are accelerating, and culture is increasingly becoming an important force in the competition of comprehensive national strength." [2] Jining, Shandong, is the birthplace of Confucian culture. The core principles of Confucianism include moral standards such as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity, emphasizing ethical relationships, social order, benevolent governance, filial piety, and the middle way. In the design of the "Cha Le Di" regional brand image, it is essential to draw upon this rich cultural foundation to construct a cultural narrative system for the brand.

2.1.2 Image Positioning

Integrating traditional visual language to shape a profound cultural temperament. The image positioning of a regional brand should utilize visual symbols and emotional connections to transform abstract regional culture into tangible brand imagery. This approach not only reflects the profound value of regional culture but also aligns with the aesthetic preferences and emotional needs of contemporary audiences, achieving the organic unity of cultural heritage and brand development. Jining, Shandong, with its rich cultural heritage and profound spiritual connotations, is renowned as the "Hometown of Confucius and Mencius, the Land of Etiquette," and possesses inherent advantages for regional brand development. Therefore, the brand positioning of "Cha Le Di" focuses on the image of "stability, elegance, restraint, and richness," using visual symbols and design language to construct a brand image that is profound and elegant, conveying the spiritual essence of Confucian culture—benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and self-discipline.

2.1.3 Market Positioning

Aligning with contemporary consumer trends to enhance brand value recognition. Regional brand image design must accurately capture the current market's needs, transforming the information the regional brand aims to convey into visual symbols that resonate with consumers. According to Baudrillard's theory of symbolic consumption, "when people purchase these items, they are not merely based on the commodity's use value or simply to satisfy practical needs, but increasingly emphasize the symbolic meaning behind them,

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which represents status, wealth, or even power." [3] Therefore, the "Tea Emperor" brand must ground itself in the new consumer context, precisely capture the psychological pursuit of cultural depth and individuality among Gen Z, and transform Confucian values such as "ritual," "harmony," and "joy" into a visual style that is simple yet dignified. This approach satisfies functional needs while imbuing consumer behavior with cultural significance and identity value.

2.2 "Cha Le Di" Regional Brand Image Design Principles

2.2.1 Humanistic Principle

As early as the Arts and Crafts Movement, theorist John Ruskin proposed the design philosophy of "putting people at the center." This concept profoundly inspires contemporary regional brand image design. A brand is not merely a commercial symbol but also a carrier of culture and a component of social practice. Regional brands are established within specific geographical boundaries and inevitably carry the cultural memories, collective emotions, and identity of local residents. Only by returning to human experience and cultural authenticity can a lasting emotional connection be established. The principle of humanism requires that brand image design should delve into local life, integrating the lifestyle, behavioral habits, and folk customs of local residents.

2.2.2 Regionality Principle

The regional principle emphasizes that brands must be rooted in local cultural genes and avoid the fragmentation and homogenization of symbols. The regional brand image design for "Cha Le Di" should be grounded in the local cultural genes of Jining, deeply exploring unique resources such as Confucian culture, Grand Canal civilization, and traditional crafts, while avoiding the generalized appropriation and formal collage of symbols. By extracting iconic architectural symbols such as the Confucius Temple and the Ni Mountain Sacred Site, the patterns of Lu brocade weaving, and the calligraphic brushwork of Han and Wei dynasty steles—all elements with strong regional identity—and transforming them through abstract and systematic design, a brand image rooted in "this land and its people" is constructed, ensuring the authenticity, locality, and sustainability of cultural expression.

2.2.3 Differentiation Principle

Under the impact of marketization, regional brands lacking a distinctive cultural core are highly susceptible to homogenization. The differentiation principle requires brand image design to deeply explore regional characteristics and transform them into unique visual symbols to stand out among numerous homogeneous brands. The local cultures of different regions, having undergone centuries or even millennia of accumulation, have formed irreplicable spiritual traits and symbolic systems. This uniqueness is the key to establishing cognitive barriers in the market and the focal point of regional brand image design.

2.3 "Cha Le Di" Regional Brand Image Design Method

2.3.1 Precise Brand Positioning and Determination of Design Elements

The construction of a regional brand image begins with precise positioning. Only by clearly defining the

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cultural core and value propositions can distinctive visual symbols be extracted, enabling the systematic integration of design elements. In terms of cultural symbols, the "bowed hands" gesture is extracted as the core visual motif—this ritual not only embodies the Confucian concept of "ritual" but also serves as a iconic symbol of Confucius, symbolizing respect for the wise and kindness to friends, while reinforcing the brand's recognizability.

In terms of typography, elegant and dignified regular script and clerical script are selected as standard fonts to reflect the solemnity and historical depth of Confucian culture. In pattern design, traditional craftsmanship resources from Jiaxiang, known as the "Hometown of Lu Brocade" in Jining, are drawn upon. "The patterns of Lu Brocade primarily use geometric shapes such as straight lines, angled lines, rectangles, and squares as design elements, rather than specific object forms." [4] Therefore, the brand design is based on abstract elements such as straight lines, broken lines, and rectangles, with the "goose eye pattern" from Lu Jin as the stylistic element. Through compositional techniques like repetition, continuity, and contrast, it creates a unified and rhythmic visual rhythm, constructing a brand recognition system with the aesthetic qualities of Confucianism.

2.3.2 Imparting Brand Essence and Showcasing Regional Culture

A brand image is not merely a visual presentation but also a carrier of cultural spirit. In the process of regional brand image design, it is essential to transcend the superficial application of visual symbols, delve into the local historical traditions and humanistic spirit, and transform them into the core values and cultural connotations of the brand, enabling the regional brand to become a disseminator and carrier of regional culture. "Cha Le Di" is rooted in Confucian culture, positioning itself as "New Confucian Lifestyle Tea Drinks." It delves into the core of Confucian thought and designs around the spirit of "ritual" and "music." The Analects state, "When friends come from afar, is it not a joy?" This establishes a super discourse system of "gathering friends over tea, is it not a joy?"

2.3.3 Uncovering regional characteristics to highlight brand differentiation

In the context of severe homogenization among tea beverage brands, "Cha Le Di" has established a unique brand identity by deeply exploring the regional characteristics of Jining. "In the Confucian color philosophy, the emphasis is not on visual or emotional colors, but on the educational and functional aspects of color. Confucians use color to symbolize virtue, employing colors to represent noble virtues. The five colors—blue, red, yellow, white, and black—are considered the most noble and orthodox colors, corresponding to the Five Constant Virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and integrity, and thus serve an educational purpose." [5] As a regional brand of Jining, Cha Le Di must align with the local character. Confucian culture imbues this land with a sense of historical depth, so in color selection, we have abandoned the high-saturation tones of mainstream brands and opted for subdued colors like black and yellow, which align with Confucian ritual traditions, to create a distinctive brand image that blends historical depth with modern aesthetics.

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3. "Cha Le Di" Regional Brand Design Practice

3.1 Strengthening Local Characteristics in Logo Design

As a regional brand of Jining, the logo design of "Cha Le Di" fully embodies local cultural characteristics. First, the iconic Confucius bowing gesture is adopted as the core visual element, cleverly integrated with the image of a milk tea cup. The "bowing gesture" represents the norms of Confucian etiquette, symbolizing respect for the wise and the virtuous, humility, and moderation, expressing the brand's philosophy of "making friends through tea" and "treating others with courtesy."

The outer contour of the logo draws inspiration from the "goose eye pattern" in Lu brocade and the hexagonal lattice windows of traditional Chinese gardens, featuring a balanced and symmetrical composition, which aligns with the Confucian principle of the "Middle Way." The color scheme features a bright orange-yellow hue. Yellow is one of the five colors revered in Confucianism, and orange-yellow evokes a sense of lightness, warmth, and vibrancy. This color not only resonates with the profound cultural heritage of Confucianism but also aligns with the modern aesthetic preferences of younger audiences, highlighting the brand's elegant sophistication and distinctiveness.



Figure 1. "Cha Le Di" brand logo design

3.2 Font Design Reinforcing Regional Associations

The typography must align with the overall style of the logo while ensuring readability for consumers. The brand's typography draws inspiration from regional characteristics, specifically the Han-Wei script from Jining, which holds a significant place in calligraphy history and is renowned as "half of China's Han steles are from Jining." Therefore, the Northern Wei script was chosen as the design inspiration. This font not only exudes a sense of historical depth but also embodies the grandeur of "inclusivity," symbolizing the brand's openness and inclusivity. In practical application, the "Cha Le Di" brand font design seamlessly blends the styles of clerical and regular scripts, inheriting the rustic charm of Han Dynasty clerical script while integrating the neatness of regular script from the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties. Lishu originated in the Han Dynasty, while regular script emerged during the Wei, Jin, and Southern and Northern Dynasties. The brand's typeface design blends both styles, bridging the Han and Jin dynasties with the Tang and Song dynasties, resonating with the historical trajectory of Confucianism, which flourished during the Han Dynasty and reached its peak during the Tang Dynasty. By integrating modern aesthetic imagery with Confucian philosophy, the design conveys a solemn and elegant visual impact while reinforcing the brand's regional associations and cultural identity.

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Figure 2. Ancient Chinese calligraphy fonts



Figure 3. "Cha Le Di" brand font design

3.3 Classic Pattern Design

In the design of the brand's exclusive patterns, we blend tradition with innovation. The first letters of the brand name "Cha Le Di" are rearranged and combined to form a closed hexagonal window shape. The pattern is arranged in a regular, continuous manner, creating an infinite loop effect, symbolizing the Confucian philosophy of "endless vitality." This design also echoes the brand logo, further enhancing brand recognition. Additionally, within this closed-loop structure, the central letter "L" is highlighted, emphasizing the brand's "joy" philosophy while adding a visual focal point to the entire design. This design approach ensures the overall pattern has depth and dimension while maintaining harmony and unity.



Figure 4. Design of the "Cha Le Di" brand pattern



Figure 5. Application of the "Cha Le Di" brand pattern design to packaging renderings

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3.4 Packaging Design Embodied with Confucian Philosophy

The packaging design of "Tea Joy Emperor" cleverly incorporates Confucian philosophy, serving as a cultural medium for disseminating Confucian thought. Drawing on Confucian culture as a framework, it uses life stages such as "standing firm at thirty," "unconfused at forty," and "knowing one's destiny at fifty" to integrate Confucian philosophy into visual language. Confucius said: "At fifteen, I set my heart on learning; at thirty, I stood firm; at forty, I was free from doubts; at fifty, I understood Heaven's will; at sixty, I heard with discernment; at seventy, I followed my heart's desires without overstepping the bounds." The brand's packaging design extracts key terms from Confucius' life stages and combines them with the brushwork style of Han and Wei dynasty calligraphy to write phrases like "joy" and "unconfused," allowing consumers to reflect on Confucian wisdom about "accepting one's fate with joy" while holding the tea drink, and truly experience the unique regional culture and charm of Confucian spirit in Jining.



Figure 6. "Cha Le Di" brand packaging design

4 Conclusion

Local culture infuses brand imagery with profound cultural connotations, not only enhancing the brand's emotional warmth and spiritual depth but also significantly boosting its competitive differentiation. Brand imagery design leverages modern visual language and creative expression to disseminate local culture, with the two complementing each other. When integrating local culture into brand imagery design, it is essential to thoroughly explore distinctive cultural elements, understand their underlying meanings, and transform them into tangible visual symbols that are seamlessly integrated into the brand imagery design. This paper takes the brand image design of Jining's "Cha Le Di" as an example, with Confucian culture as its core, and through cultural refinement, humanistic design principles, and differentiated visual expressions, explores a practical path for integrating local culture into regional brand image construction. This not only establishes a distinct brand identity and cultural recognition for the "Cha Le Di" regional brand but also provides a reference path for the localization of other regional brands.

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