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## THE ROLE OF DESIGN OBJECTS IN CREATING THE VISUAL IDENTITY OF A CITY BASED ON THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CHINA

**The purpose:** to investigate and analyze the current situation regarding the integration of Chinese cultural heritage into design objects aimed at creating the city's image, substantiating the necessity of such integration in modern conditions.

**Methodology.** The research used the methods of literature review, synthesis, analysis, and systematization of the obtained results. Additionally, a situational analysis of the visual image of Chinese sports events is conducted.

**Results.** The importance and necessity of integrating aesthetic elements of Chinese cultural heritage into the design production of the city's visual identity are justified. Future research directions in this field are identified. The study analyzes successful examples of design objects for major sports events in China developed using cultural heritage elements.

**Scientific novelty.** The study involves the analysis and synthesis of previous research on the topic. Based on this analysis, four promising directions for further research in the field of design production for creating the urban image are identified.

**Practical significance.** The findings of this research can be applied in studying innovative design based on cultural heritage and in practical design of objects visualizing the urban image.

**Keywords:** visual identity, city image, city identity, design objects for sports events, graphic design, regional culture, logo design, corporate identity, cultural heritage.

**Introduction.** Under the trend of economic globalization, the homogenization of urban culture is intensifying. How to maintain the uniqueness and independence of urban culture has become a hot topic for many scholars. In today's "visual era", visual communication has become an important channel for information dissemination. The urban image includes people's overall perception and overall cultural cognition of the city, representing the cultural cohesion and unique characteristics generated by the integration of historical and current elements. It is a cultural memory field that integrates natural landscapes and local customs, presenting the typical and diverse regional symbols of the city. The visual design of the urban image provides an objective basis and an effective communication channel for creating a unique urban identity. However, under the increasingly homogenized urban development status quo,

the relationship between cultural heritage and urban image also faces challenges and problems, such as obscure highlighting of urban culture and a lack of visual image design. Therefore, combing and analyzing the regional cultural heritage characteristics such as geographical location, scenic spots, history, culture, folk culture, food culture, and using artistic visual language expressions for urban image design can form a systematic urban visual image. This can more intuitively and quickly convey the regional characteristics of the city to the public, which can not only enhance the image of the entire city but also show its unique charm, allowing people to have a deeper understanding and increase recognition.

**Analysis of previous researches.** The cultivation of image and identity in cities through the strategic use of local cultural heritage assets has become an important focus in urban planning and design scholarship. As

cities increasingly compete for investment, talent, and tourism on the global stage, developing a distinctive and compelling brand and reputation rooted in cultural heritage can provide advantages [1; 2].

Academic literature has explored various approaches to leveraging historic, cultural and creative assets to enhance the image and identity of cities in ways that speak to unique local values and traditions. The earliest study on urban image was conducted by American communication scholar Kevin Lynch [3]. In "The Image of the City", he first proposed the concept of "urban image", and in emphasizing the five elements of urban image (paths, districts, nodes, edges and landmarks), he proposed the visual identifiability of landmarks. It only stays in the field of architecture and does not fully integrate the concept of urban image into the visual communication system to be understood and studied. At first, "markers" refers to the buildings and signs with characteristics in each region, but gradually the concept of urban markers becomes clear, involving the visual signs of the city brand, new cultural landmarks, squares, etc.

A significant area of research examines the linkage between built cultural heritage conservation and urban image building. Scholars such as G.J. Ashworth [1] and F. Bandarin [2] argue that preserving and adaptively reusing historic buildings, older townscapes, and cultural landscapes provides powerful image differentiation. Heritage conservation through designation, regulation, and sensitive reuse helps nurture place distinctiveness and authenticity. Both argue for integrating heritage stewardship with economic development and tourism strategies to nurture an appealing image that benefits residents and investors alike.

Another focus has been on major new architectural icons and cultural flagships as tools for rapidly repositioning a city's global image. B. Plaza [4] demonstrates how high-profile museum projects in post-industrial cities like Bilbao have quickly reshaped external

perceptions of those cities as dynamic cultural tourism destinations. Other researchers have examined new cultural districts and quarters as image enhancement mechanisms, signaling a diverse, creative urban lifestyle attractive to young professionals [5]. While culture-led branding is influential, risks exist. Critics argue that top-down initiatives marginalize local identity and impose a homogenized, marketable image [6]. Excessively commercial approaches undermine heritage authenticity and community ownership [7]. It reveals urban image design drawing on cultural heritage is a major global phenomenon and has a bright future.

**Statement of the problem.** Currently, based on the above literature review and analysis, there are several issues with urban image design related to cultural heritage:

Innovation and dissemination of cultural heritage can contribute to the development of urban image, while leveraging the broadcasting capability of cities can also help regional cultural heritage gain better opportunities for output.

In many studies, the urgency of urban cultural transformation is emphasized, and the importance of applying regional culture to improve the stereotyped urban image is pointed out, but there is still a lack of research on how to reasonably establish urban image symbols by drawing on elements of cultural heritage.

The application of cultural heritage in urban development can effectively promote sustainable urban development, but the specific design areas and application methods covered by urban visual image have not been well demonstrated.

These issues need to be addressed with cases and designs of the role of cultural heritage in urban visual image design in order to propose more comprehensive methods and strategies.

**The results of the research and their discussion.** At present, urban image building has become the focus of related research on urban image. There are also some discussions in the scientific literature considering the

interactive relationship between cultural heritage and urban image design.

An important contribution to these studies is the article by C. Cheng [8], which outlines the research and development trends of urban image theory worldwide and reviews the scientific achievements in various parts of the world by dividing them into budding, formation and sustainable development stages. In her summary, whether in China or other parts of the world, urban development has evolved from "functional cities" to "cultural cities" and then to "image-featured cities". She proposes the importance of expanding the urban image visual system and urban brand design strategies through regional cultural resources.

So far, in research on urban image design, many have proposed the importance of regional cultural heritage, but specialized research on the relationship between cultural heritage and urban image design is still lacking. Various research perspectives have been analyzed in research related to urban image.

In the article X.-y. Yang and W.-W. Wang [9] recommended using the design DNA analysis and construction method, taking Xi'an, China as an example, semantic analysis and model creation of local culture-based urban visual elements were performed. It particularly emphasizes using urban cultural heritage as the starting point and pulse of urban culture.

The research of R.G. Harland [10] discusses the relationship between graphic objects and urban identity. It argues that graphic objects such as logos, symbols and displays are ubiquitous but often overlooked. Taking Dubai as a case study, it analyzes how its brand center effectively fuses its urban image and cultural identity by juxtaposing modern architecture and Arab heritage.

The articles of H. Sameh and D.-h. Kim [11; 12] studied urban branding promotion practices in three major metropolitan areas in China against the backdrop of global cities. Using city branding strategies, these cities introduce themselves to the outside world and reposition their relationships with each other.

The analysis of some cities shows different results, indicating that some cities are not interested in manufacturing-centered brands. In contrast, cities focusing on cultural and knowledge-based approaches show advantages in promoting urban sustainability and brand building. G. Muratovski [13] argues that a successful city brand needs a comprehensive design strategy, not just iconic architectural landmarks for marketing purposes. Successful city brands like New York, Paris and London have strong social and cultural characteristics as well as architectural features.

The paper of H. Yang [14] uses a hierarchical approach to divide the urban cultural branding system into three subsystems: first is the cultural identity and symbols of products; second is the scenic cultural spaces and scenes; third is the semantic cultural experiences and events. It pointed out the possible paths and practical approaches for the construction of urban cultural branding with intangible cultural heritage. Its research also provides inspiration for the need to build visual symbols in urban brand development, which is consistent with the research perspectives of some scholars. For example, X. Hou [15] also mentions the importance of cultural heritage for constructing visual symbols in urban image building. It can be seen that in urban brand design, the visual symbolization of cultural heritage should be emphasized.

In the construction of visual symbols, the mascot representation of urban culture is an aspect considered by many scholars and designers. In the article by J.L. Shao [16], takes Xi'an's "Tang Girl" as an example, it discusses the brand building of urban IP images. It emphasizes the importance of original IP images combined with local culture in enhancing urban image and competitiveness. It provides valuable insights into IP image development strategies, including leveraging cultural creativity, storytelling, social media engagement and strategic partnerships. It also demonstrates how to fully utilize IP imagery to

boost tourism and economic growth. These creative strategies and best practices can serve as useful references for other cities seeking to develop unique cultural IP images to enhance their brand identities.

Some other scholars provide directions and guidance on international communication and the application of new technologies in city branding research. Important is the result of the study of D.h. Xu & L.y. Guo [17], which discusses the building of Hangzhou's urban image from the perspective of urban culture. It emphasizes leveraging Hangzhou's unique cultural features, including historical heritage, regional characteristics and innovation capabilities. From excavating cultural resources to optimizing cultural industries, to enhancing international image, it provides valuable insights into incorporating urban culture throughout the process of city branding. Notably, it mentions utilizing internet technologies to build a virtual urban space. With the development and application of virtual technologies, the future development of urban image construction will rely on the development and creation of virtual urban images, providing new research directions for the innovative development of this study.

The papers of A. Smith [18], M.C. tom Dieck & T.H. Jung [19] are devoted to emphasize that designing and establishing a unique urban image contributes to sustainable urban development and a sense of belonging for urban residents. N. Duxbury et al. [20] argues that local culture plays a role in shaping sustainable urban development, with cultural heritage emphasized as a key component. It points out that integrating cultural heritage with contemporary urban life can effectively promote the development of the urban economy, inclusiveness and creativity. This integration not only preserves history and tradition but also injects cities with unique allure and charm. By protecting and disseminating cultural heritage, cities can better achieve their goals of economic prosperity and social progress.

The design and individualization of urban image requires the integration of cultural

attributes and urban image. As the essence of cultural elements, integrating cultural heritage into modern urban visual image design is a feasible approach to enhancing urban influence and a way to broaden the dissemination of cultural heritage through urban tourism. This study proposes four methods to achieve this goal.

First, select identifiable and cultural heritage symbols and integrate them into the design of urban image logos to build an influential urban brand and increase the city's external recognition. For example, H. Liu. [21] proposes urban image design concepts, principles and methods from the perspective of regional cultural background. C. Guan [22] takes Hangzhou, China, as an example, combined with the historical and cultural development and urban image characteristics of Hangzhou, refers to the public's cognition of Hangzhou's urban image symbols, clarifies Hangzhou's urban positioning, and constructs a graphic symbol system for Hangzhou's urban image.

Secondly, large-scale sports events and international activities are effective ways to enhance a city's influence incorporating the visual image design of major urban public events into the city's image development, integrating cultural heritage visual elements. For example, X. Mo [23] analyzed how three cities, Beijing, Shenzhen, and Sheffield, used large international sports events to shape their urban brand images. She also pointed out that Chengdu can utilize the World University Games to develop a cultural city image strategy.

Thirdly, selecting region-specific urban products as channels for promoting the city's image, applying packaging designs that incorporate cultural heritage elements to emphasize the cultural distinctiveness of the city's region. For instance, Y. Li & B. Wang [24] conducted research on Macau's tourism food products, exploring the approaches and strategies of city image integration in the packaging design of these products. Using city image communication theories, he analyzed the development of tourism food products and

the tourism food industry. Starting from classic city image elements such as cultural heritage, traditional crafts, gambling, festivals, and events, Li Yixuan extended the analysis to four dimensions: color, visual symbols, language, and design style in the packaging of tourism food products.

Fourthly, developing regional cultural heritage festivals and folk celebrations and promoting the cultural city by showcasing and offering cultural activities, thus highlighting the distinctive elements of the city's image.

For example, Beth Perry et al. [25] conducted research on 18 festivals in the global North and South regions, studying the role of festivals as integrative spaces and revealing the entanglement between tangible and intangible cultural heritage forms. The study calls for further research into the transformative potential of festivals in supporting cultural democracy and just cities as a platform for exploring contested urban heritage. It also cites numerous examples related to festivals, urban tourism, and urban community in the context of urban cultural heritage, offering new research avenues for city image design.

In recent years, the hosting of large sports events has garnered attention from some scholars regarding the establishment and development of city images. J.B. Ritchie & B.H. Smith [26] studied the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics in Canada, demonstrating the positive impact of sports events on shaping the city's brand image. Y. Liu, using Beijing as an example, researched the effects of large sports events on enhancing the city's brand image. The hosting of large sports events provided Beijing with opportunities for better city image promotion and established distinctive visual elements using cultural heritage visual symbols.

Currently, most Chinese and international research focuses on the impact of large sports events on city image, while there is relatively less research on how to promote city brand image through the development and implementation of design methods and strategies during large sports events.

Consider the numerous design cases from the recent Chengdu World University Games in China that have incorporated cultural heritage into the visual image design of the large sports event, playing a significant role in the dissemination of Chengdu's global image.

Chengdu, as a representative of China's well-established city visual image, introduced its city emblem in 2011, which is modeled after the "Sun Bird" gold ornament. The "Sun Bird" gold ornament is an important cultural heritage discovered at the Jinsha archaeological site. Its overall design resembles a paper-cut pattern with four flying birds on the outer layer, expressing the ancient Chinese reverence and worship for nature and life (Fig. 1).

As the organizer of the 31st World University Games, the primary visual design for the Chengdu Universiade is an extension of Chengdu's cultural heritage and the image of the "Sun Bird" visual emblem.

In terms of visual integration, the design of the Universiade emblem continues the image of the Sun Bird, expressing the positive and upward spirit of people's pursuit of enlightenment. The fusion of the English letter "u" as a design pattern forms the integration of the city's own image with the sports event emblem. In the design of the Universiade torch, the Chengdu city emblem and the Chinese cultural heritage symbol, the "Sun Bird," are integrated through perforations at the top of the torch, creating a fusion of shapes (Fig. 2).

From a cultural fusion perspective, Chengdu, being an ancient city in China, possesses not only the iconic "Sun Bird" heritage but also various other regional cultural legacies. In the design of the Universiade medals, the designer incorporated elements from different eras, such as the Liangzhu culture's jade bird, Shang and Zhou dynasty bronze human figurines, oracle bone script, and more. These cultural elements were presented through fast-surface cutting techniques.

On the back of the medals, surrounding the emblem of the World University Games, silhouettes of Chengdu's iconic landmarks, such

as sports venues and museums, were integrated. This fusion of city cultural heritage and the city's image through medal decoration

design creates a rich tapestry that celebrates the cultural diversity and heritage of Chengdu (Fig. 3).



Fig. 1. The visual identity emblem of Chengdu City, 2011 [27]



Fig. 2. The LOGO and torch design for the Chengdu World University Games, 2021 [28]



Fig. 3. The medals of the Chengdu 2021 FISU Games, 2023 [29]

**Conclusions.** In the context of global development and urbanization, the unique design of a city's image has become increasingly important. To maintain a city's distinctiveness, integrating the aesthetic elements of cultural heritage into the city's visual identity design is an effective solution. Through literature analysis, it is evident that there has been substantial attention given to city branding, sustainable urban design, and city identity design. However, there are still

several areas where specific case designs and design strategies need further improvement.

Indeed, a comprehensive approach to establishing and researching a city's visual identity is a promising future direction for research. This approach can be explored from various angles, including city branding design, urban symbol discovery, packaging design for well-established city brands, and large-scale sports event design.

China, with its rich cultural heritage, has provided numerous research cases in recent

years, especially in the context of large sports events and cultural festivals. Future research should continue to collect more diverse and in-depth case studies, allowing for a thorough analysis of specific methods and strategies in city visual identity design. This research will

contribute to a deeper understanding of how cities can leverage their cultural heritage and visual elements to create strong and unique visual identities that resonate with their residents and make a lasting impression on visitors in a globalized world.

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## РОЛЬ ДИЗАЙН-ОБ'ЄКТІВ У СТВОРЕННІ ВІЗУАЛЬНОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ МІСТА НА ОСНОВІ КУЛЬТУРНОЇ СПАДЩИНИ КИТАЮ

**Мета:** дослідити та проаналізувати поточну ситуацію щодо інтеграції китайської культурної спадщини у дизайн-об'єкти, розроблені з метою створення образу міста, обґрунтувати необхідність такої інтеграції в сучасних умовах

**Методологія.** У дослідженні застосовано метод огляду літератури, узагальнення, аналізу та систематизації отриманих результатів, також проведено ситуаційний аналіз візуального образу китайських спортивних подій.

**Результати.** Обґрунтовано важливість і необхідність інтеграції естетичних елементів китайської культурної спадщини в дизайн-продукцію візуальної ідентичності міста. Визначено майбутні напрями досліджень у цій галузі. Проаналізовано деякі успішні приклади об'єктів дизайну для великих спортивних подій у Китаї, розробленого з використанням елементів культурної спадщини

**Наукова новизна.** Проведено аналіз та узагальнення попередніх досліджень за тематикою роботи. На основі аналізу виокремлено чотири перспективні напрями подальших досліджень у галузі дизайну продукції для створення міського образу..

**Практичне значення.** Результати цього дослідження можна використати при вивченні інноваційного дизайну на основі культурної спадщини та в практичному дизайні об'єктів, що візуалізують міський образ.

**Ключові слова:** візуальна ідентичність, образ міста, айдентика міста, дизайн об'єктів для спортивних подій, графічний дизайн, регіональна культура, дизайн логотипу, фірмовий стиль, культурна спадщина.

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