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The Application of Traditional Chinese Auspicious Animal Patterns in Commercial Poster Illustration

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Abstract: Traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns are significant symbols of Chinese culture, carrying profound historical and cultural connotations. In the context of globalization and digitalization, how to innovatively apply traditional patterns to modern commercial poster illustrations has become an important topic in the cultural and creative industries. This study focuses on traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns, exploring their application strategies and practical approaches in commercial poster illustrations. Through literature review, case analysis, and comparative analysis, this paper examines the cultural and artistic characteristics of traditional patterns, combined with the visual language and communication functions of commercial poster illustrations. It proposes application strategies such as aligning pattern selection with themes, integrating traditional designs with modern aesthetics, unifying color schemes with brand identity, and enhancing composition for visual impact. By analyzing typical domestic and international cases, the study summarizes successful experiences and shortcomings, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for the modern application of traditional patterns. The research demonstrates that incorporating traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns into commercial poster illustrations not only inherits and promotes traditional culture but also enhances the cultural value and market competitiveness of designs, injecting new vitality into the sustainable development of the cultural and creative industries.

Keywords: traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns; commercial poster illustration; cultural and creative industries; visual communication design

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1. Introduction

Traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns are treasures of Chinese cultural heritage, with a history tracing back to ancient totem worship. Over thousands of years, they have evolved into a unique artistic system. Patterns such as dragons, phoenixes, qilins, and cranes are not only widely used in architecture, clothing, and artifacts for their elegant forms and rich symbolic meanings but are also deeply rooted in the cultural DNA of the Chinese nation, serving as important carriers of people's aspirations for a better life. However, in the era of globalization and digitalization, the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture face unprecedented challenges. How to integrate traditional cultural elements into modern designs while preserving their essence and meeting contemporary aesthetic demands has become a pressing issue for the cultural and creative industries. Commercial poster illustration, as an important form of modern visual communication design, plays a significant role in brand promotion, cultural dissemination, and social advocacy due to its intuitive, vivid, and easily shareable characteristics. Applying traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns to commercial poster illustrations not only endows modern designs with profound cultural depth but also attracts a broader audience

through innovative visual language, enhancing the cultural value and market competitiveness of brands. This integration represents both the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture and the enrichment and expansion of modern design language. This study focuses on traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns, exploring their application strategies and practical approaches in commercial poster illustrations. By analyzing the cultural and artistic characteristics of traditional patterns and combining them with the visual language and communication functions of commercial poster illustrations, the study proposes practical application strategies. Through case analysis, it summarizes successful experiences and shortcomings. The research employs literature review, case analysis, and comparative analysis methods, aiming to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the modern application of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns, inject cultural vitality into the innovation of commercial poster illustration design, and contribute to the sustainable development of the cultural and creative industries. This research holds significant theoretical value by deepening the understanding of the modern transformation of traditional patterns and enriching the theoretical system of visual communication design. It also has practical significance by offering actionable strategies for designers, promoting the deep integration of traditional culture and modern design, enhancing cultural confidence, and elevating the international influence of Chinese design [1].

2. Current Application and Shortcomings of Traditional Chinese Auspicious Animal Patterns in Commercial Poster Illustrations

2.1. Current Application

In recent years, with the rapid development of the cultural and creative industries, the application of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations has gradually increased, becoming an important means for designers to express cultural connotations and attract audiences. Domestically, many brands and institutions have begun to integrate traditional patterns into modern designs. For example, the promotional posters for the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products skillfully combine auspicious animal patterns such as dragons, phoenixes, and qilins with fashionable elements, showcasing the charm of traditional culture while meeting the aesthetic preferences of young audiences. Additionally, established brands such as Pechoin and Tongrentang have used traditional patterns in their commercial poster illustrations to convey their historical heritage and cultural value. On the international stage, traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns have also garnered attention [2]. Many international brands have incorporated patterns such as dragons and phoenixes into their marketing campaigns in China to localize their appeal. For instance, luxury brands like Gucci and Dior have extensively used traditional patterns in their Chinese-themed advertising series to connect with Chinese consumers. These cases demonstrate that the application of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations not only enhances the cultural value of designs but also strengthens brand recognition and market competitiveness.

2.2. Existing Shortcomings

Despite the achievements in applying traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns to commercial poster illustrations, several issues and shortcomings remain. First, some designs superficially use traditional patterns without delving into their cultural connotations, resulting in monotonous forms and hollow content that fail to resonate emotionally with audiences. Second, some designs struggle to harmonize traditional and modern elements, either being too conservative and lacking innovation or too radical and losing the essence of traditional patterns, leading to incongruous design styles. Additionally, some designers misunderstand traditional patterns, misusing or combining them inappropriately, even misinterpreting and abusing cultural symbols, which diminishes the cultural

value and communication effectiveness of the designs. From an industry perspective, the application of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations has yet to form a systematic theoretical framework or practical standards. Designers often rely on personal experience and subjective judgment, lacking scientific guidance and support [3]. Meanwhile, the scarcity of related research and educational resources has led to a shortage of design talent, making it difficult to meet market demands. These issues have somewhat limited the widespread application and innovative development of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations. In summary, while the application of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations has achieved certain successes, further exploration and improvement are needed in areas such as cultural connotation mining, design innovation, and industry standardization to achieve deep integration of traditional culture and modern design and promote the sustainable development of the cultural and creative industries [4].

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Semiotics Theory

Semiotics theory provides an important analytical framework for this study. According to semiotics, a sign consists of a signifier (form) and a signified (meaning). Traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns, as visual signs, have signifiers in the form of specific pattern shapes, such as the winding body of a dragon or the elegant wings of a phoenix, and signifieds in the cultural connotations and symbolic meanings they carry, such as the dragon symbolizing authority and power, and the phoenix representing auspiciousness and beauty. In commercial poster illustrations, designers can transform abstract cultural meanings into intuitive visual language through the semiotic application of traditional patterns, effectively conveying brand messages and values. Semiotics theory also emphasizes the polysemy and context-dependence of signs, meaning that the same sign may be interpreted differently in various cultural backgrounds and design contexts. Therefore, designers must consider the cultural cognition and aesthetic preferences of the target audience when applying traditional patterns to ensure accurate communication of symbolic meanings [5].

3.2. Cultural Creativity Theory

Cultural creativity theory provides practical guidance for this study. The cultural and creative industries emphasize the dual enhancement of economic and cultural value through creative transformation and the development of cultural resources. Traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns, as important cultural resources with profound historical significance and widespread social recognition, are valuable materials for the cultural and creative industries. In commercial poster illustrations, designers can transform traditional patterns into marketable cultural products through innovative applications, thereby driving the development of the cultural and creative industries. Cultural creativity theory also emphasizes cross-border integration and collaborative innovation, encouraging cooperation across different fields and industries to diversify the development and application of cultural resources. Therefore, designers can draw inspiration from other art forms or collaborate with technology and fashion industries to enhance the creativity and appeal of their designs [6].

3.3. Visual Communication Design Theory

Visual communication design theory provides methodological support for this study. Visual communication design emphasizes the effective transmission of information and emotional resonance with the audience through the combination and arrangement of visual elements such as graphics, colors, and text. In commercial poster illustrations, designers need to apply fundamental principles of visual communication design, such as contrast, symmetry, balance, and rhythm, to integrate traditional Chinese auspicious animal

patterns with other design elements, creating works with visual impact and artistic appeal. Visual communication design theory also emphasizes user experience and emotional design, optimizing the visual and emotional experiences of users to enhance the communication effectiveness of designs. Therefore, designers must consider the visual habits and emotional needs of the audience when applying traditional patterns, using design innovation to increase user engagement and identification. In summary, semiotics theory, cultural creativity theory, and visual communication design theory provide multi-dimensional theoretical support for this study. By integrating these theories, the study can deeply analyze the application mechanisms of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations, propose scientific design strategies, and offer theoretical and practical guidance for the modern transformation of traditional culture and the innovative development of commercial poster illustrations [7].

4. Application Strategies of Traditional Chinese Auspicious Animal Patterns in Commercial Poster Illustrations

4.1. Pattern Selection and Theme Alignment

In commercial poster design, the selection of patterns is crucial, as it must carry traditional cultural connotations while aligning with modern visual aesthetics and market demands. Taking Figure 1 as an example, this poster features the snake as the core auspicious animal pattern, aligning with the festive context of the Chinese zodiac culture. In traditional Chinese culture, the snake symbolizes agility and wisdom, often appearing in festive scenes such as Lunar New Year celebrations to convey blessings and good fortune. In this design, the snake's image is cartoonized and anthropomorphized, making it more approachable and endearing, particularly appealing to younger consumers. This design strategy not only preserves the core symbolic meaning of traditional culture but also enhances commercial appeal through softening and playful treatment [8].



Figure 1. Innovative Integration of 2025 New Year Auspicious Culture and Commercial Design.

The background elements further reinforce the theme alignment. Red lanterns symbolize the festive atmosphere and family reunion, while traditional palace architecture and auspicious cloud patterns create a strong Chinese cultural ambiance, reflecting the profound heritage of traditional culture. The floral elements in the design symbolize prosperity and hope, complementing the "Happy 2025" text to convey New Year blessings. This

perfect alignment between pattern selection and theme demonstrates the integration strategy of traditional culture and modern design. By combining traditional auspicious animal patterns with festive symbols and employing a cartoonized expression, the poster successfully conveys the spiritual essence of traditional Chinese New Year culture while enhancing cultural memorability in commercial communication. This design approach attracts a broader audience and showcases the diverse applications of cultural innovation in modern commerce. Moreover, from a brand communication perspective, such design strategies exhibit strong market adaptability. By transforming traditional elements into distinctive visual symbols, brands can establish cultural recognition in both domestic and international markets, catering to global consumers' interest in Chinese cultural elements while promoting the dissemination of traditional Chinese auspicious culture. Such visual designs not only pay homage to traditional culture but also represent an active exploration of the future development of commercial design, creating deeper cultural value for brands [9].

4.2. Stylistic Design and Modern Aesthetic Integration

In modern commercial design, stylistic design is not only a tool for conveying information but also an important medium for emotional expression and cultural communication. Taking Figure 2 as an example, this poster integrates traditional floral and bird patterns with contemporary visual aesthetics through modernized treatment, fully demonstrating the deep integration of culture and art in commercial design. First, the core of stylistic design lies in the refinement and reinterpretation of traditional elements. The poster uses classic floral and bird patterns, including phoenixes, plum blossoms, and lanterns, all of which are symbols of auspiciousness in Chinese culture. The phoenix symbolizes nobility and prosperity, the plum blossom represents resilience and renewal, and the lantern creates a strong festive atmosphere. These traditional symbols convey the unique cultural connotations of Chinese New Year through delicate brushstrokes and symmetrical compositions [10].



Figure 2. Fusion of Chinese New Year Floral and Bird Patterns with Modern Illustration Design.

Second, in terms of form, the designer skillfully incorporates modern illustration design language, breathing new life into traditional elements. In terms of color, the deep

green background highlights the combination of traditional Chinese red and gold, not only conveying a festive atmosphere but also adding a modern and elegant touch to the overall design. In terms of styling, the phoenix's lines are simplified and geometrized, harmonizing with the flowers and branches to create a visual rhythm that avoids the complexity of traditional designs, better aligning with contemporary audience preferences. Additionally, the typography and layout reflect the fusion of tradition and modernity. The phrase (Gong Xi Fa Cai) on the lantern uses traditional calligraphy, consistent with the overall style of the poster, while the English text "GONG XI FA CAI" employs a clean sans-serif font, echoing modern design language and meeting the needs of international communication. This innovative stylistic design strategy not only preserves the spiritual essence of traditional culture but also enhances visual impact and market adaptability through modern design language. This approach is particularly suitable for the international dissemination of Chinese traditional culture, enabling designs to evoke cultural identity among local audiences while sparking cultural interest among international audiences, serving as a bridge for cross-cultural communication. In summary, Figure 2 provides new possibilities for the application of traditional Chinese floral and bird patterns in commercial design through the deep integration of stylistic design and modern aesthetics. This design method represents both an innovative expression of traditional culture and an artistic exploration and cultural breakthrough in the field of commercial posters.

4.3. Color Application and Brand Identity Unification

In the application of Chinese traditional auspicious animal patterns, the use of color is not only an important part of visual design, but also a key means to convey brand image and cultural connotation. The traditional Chinese color system is rich and diverse, and each color carries a specific cultural symbol and emotional meaning. For example, red symbolizes festivity and enthusiasm, yellow represents honor and power, green implies nature and vitality, and blue symbolizes tranquility and wisdom. In commercial poster illustration, designers should make full use of the cultural attributes of these colors to unify them with brand image and thematic content. In the commercial poster illustration, the designer should choose the appropriate color scheme according to the brand's image positioning and publicity objectives. For example, for young fashion brands, bright, lively colors such as orange, pink, etc. can be used to attract the attention of young audiences; For high-end luxury brands, classic and calm colors, such as gold and black, can be used to convey the dignity and quality of the brand. In addition, designers also need to pay attention to the proportion and collocation of colors, avoid too complicated or monotone, to ensure the harmony and unity of visual effects. Through the accurate use of color, designers can realize the perfect integration of traditional patterns and modern brand images in commercial poster illustrations, which not only retains the essence of traditional culture, but also meets the modern aesthetic and market demand. The unification of color and brand image can not only enhance the visual impact of the poster, but also enhance the cultural value and market competitiveness of the brand.

5. Case Analysis

To better understand the application of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations, As the Figure 3 shown, this study selects the "Palace Museum Cultural and Creative" poster series as the analysis object. As a representative of traditional Chinese culture, the Palace Museum has successfully integrated traditional cultural elements into modern designs in recent years through cultural and creative products and new media communication, attracting significant attention from younger audiences.



Figure 3. Palace Museum Cultural and Creative.

Its poster series features traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns as the core design elements, combined with modern visual language, showcasing the perfect integration of traditional culture and modern aesthetics. In the "Palace Museum Cultural and Creative" poster series, designers skillfully use traditional auspicious animal patterns such as dragons, phoenixes, and qilins, combined with modern design techniques, to create posters with both cultural depth and visual appeal. First, in terms of pattern selection, designers choose symbolic auspicious animal patterns based on the poster's theme and brand positioning. For example, in a poster themed "Dragon and Phoenix Bringing Prosperity," the dragon and phoenix patterns are used as core elements, with the dragon symbolizing authority and power and the phoenix representing beauty and happiness. Their combination not only aligns with the cultural positioning of the Palace Museum but also conveys the auspicious meaning of cultural and creative products. Second, in terms of stylistic design, designers modernize traditional patterns while preserving their essence. For example, the dragon pattern is rendered with smooth lines and geometric shapes, while the phoenix pattern is abstracted through feather designs, making it more aligned with modern aesthetic trends. This design approach preserves the charm of traditional culture while endowing the posters with a sense of fashion and artistry. In terms of color application, the poster is mainly based on the classic color scheme of the Forbidden City, such as red, gold and black. Red symbolizes jubilation and enthusiasm, gold represents honor and luxury, and black increases the sedate sense of design. This color matching is not only highly unified with the brand image of the Forbidden City, but also enhances the visual impact and cultural recognition of the poster. In addition, in the composition layout, the designer used a combination of symmetry and whitespace. For example, the dragon and phoenix patterns are placed in the center of the picture, surrounded by simple decorative elements to form a strong visual focus. The use of white space adds a sense of breath to the picture, avoiding an overcrowded layout and making the overall design more harmonious and balanced. The "Palace Museum Cultural and Creative" poster series has successfully attracted significant attention from younger audiences through online and offline multi-channel dissemination. The posters not only enhance the market visibility of the Palace Museum's cultural and creative products but also strengthen the brand's cultural value and social influence. Many consumers have expressed that the poster designs sparked their interest in traditional culture and motivated them to purchase related cultural and creative products. The success of this case lies in its perfect integration of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns with modern design language, preserving the

essence of traditional culture while meeting modern aesthetic and market demands. Through this case analysis, we can further validate the effectiveness of the application strategies of traditional Chinese auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustrations and provide reference and inspiration for future design practices. The successful experience of the Palace Museum Cultural and Creative poster series demonstrates that through precise pattern selection, innovative stylistic design, unified color application, and reasonable composition layout, traditional patterns can be revitalized in commercial poster illustrations, achieving both cultural and commercial value.

6. Conclusion

Through in-depth discussion on the application of Chinese traditional auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustration, this study summarizes its cultural value and practical significance in modern design. The research shows that, as a unique cultural symbol, Chinese traditional auspicious animal patterns not only carry rich historical connotation and national emotion, but also can combine with modern commercial poster illustrations through innovative design techniques, giving the design a profound cultural deposits and artistic charm. Through the combination of pattern selection and theme, the combination of shape design and modern aesthetics, the unification of color application and brand image, and the enhancement of composition layout and visual impact, designers can effectively integrate traditional patterns into modern visual communication design, and improve the cultural value and market competitiveness of brands. In addition, this study further verifies the feasibility and effectiveness of these application strategies through case analysis. For example, the success of the "Palace Museum Culture and Creativity" series of posters shows the great potential of traditional patterns in modern design and provides valuable reference experience for other brands. In general, the application of Chinese traditional auspicious animal patterns in commercial poster illustration not only helps to inherit and carry forward traditional culture, but also can inject new vitality into modern design and promote the sustainable development of cultural and creative industries.

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