FIGURATIVE AND SYMBOLIC MEANS OF VISUALISING THE IDEA OF GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AND COOPERATION IN THE BRAND IDENTITY

Yuan Peijie[1], Krotova Tetiana Fedorivna[2]

[1] *Postgraduate Student at the Department of Art and Costume Design,*
Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design, Kyiv, Ukraine,
e-mail: 382865431@qq.com, orcid: 0009-0000-8621-5907
[2] *Doctor of Arts, Professor at the Department of Art and Costume Design,*
Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design, Kyiv, Ukraine,
e-mail: krotova_t@ukr.net, orcid: 0000-0003-2282-0029

Abstract. **The purpose** *of this study is to identify figurative and symbolic means in the development of identity and in the creation of brand image in the context of the values of China's international Belt and Road Initiative.*

Methodology. *This study was conducted using a combination of case studies and design practice. The case study is mainly used to understand how existing brands reflect the values of the Belt and Road Initiative in practical applications. The design practice is based on the case analysis to further validate and refine the proposed brand image design strategy, therefore, the methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison and processing of information were used.*

Result *were the finding that brand image design consistent with the core values of the Belt and Road Initiative can significantly enhance the brand's awareness and reputation in the relevant countries and regions. By incorporating the values of cooperation, inclusiveness and common growth as the core elements of the design, it not only enhances the emotional connection between the brand and the target audience, but also promotes mutual understanding and respect in cross-cultural contexts. New perspectives and ideas for brand image design to play a role in communicating the values of the Belt and Road Initiative, building brand loyalty, and promoting intercultural communication and understanding are justified and proposed.*

Scientific novelty. *This study proposes a design strategy corresponding to the core values, which provides new ideas and directions for the development of brands in the global market. The design strategies proposed in this study not only have theoretical value, but also have important practical significance, and can provide scientific and feasible operational guidelines and references for global brands.*

Practical relevance. *This research will facilitate intercultural communication and understanding between audiences in countries and regions along the Belt and Road, and will help to foster mutual understanding and respect across cultural contexts. Design solutions to inspire and promote global brand collaboration for economic prosperity and cultural exchange are substantiated and proposed.*

Keywords: graphic design, brand identity, figurative and symbolic means, Belt and Road Initiative, co-operation, inclusiveness, brand image, design strategy.

INTRODUCTION

In today's global economic integration and increasingly frequent cultural exchanges, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as a major international cooperation platform put forward by China, is promoting economic and cultural development with unprecedented strength.The core values of cooperation, inclusiveness, and common growth advocated by the BRI not only injected new vitality into international cooperation, but also provided new perspectives and concepts for brand image design. Under the framework of BRI, the alignment of brand image with these values and conveying the vision of common growth through the visual identity system has become a topic worthy of in-depth exploration. This study is exploring brand image design strategies under the values of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to provide guidance for brands looking for new positioning and strategies in the global marketplace.

Under the BRI framework, how brands can fit in with the initiative's values of cooperation, inclusiveness, and shared growth, and communicate the vision of shared growth through the visual identity system, is an important issue facing brand identity design today. First understand and communicate the core values of BRI. Deeply understand BRI's core values, including cooperation, inclusiveness and common growth, and think about how to convey these values to the audience through visual design. Secondly, cross-cultural design of brand image. As countries and regions along the BRI have diverse cultural backgrounds, brands need to overcome cultural differences and design a brand image that can cross cultural boundaries and resonate widely. Finally, it is to contribute to the future development of global connectivity. Brand image design is not only about the development of the brand itself, but also about the future of global connectivity.

ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

The principle of brand image design is based on consumers' feelings and the aesthetic pursuit of the enterprise itself. The brand image theory is a creative concept proposed by David Ogilvy in the mid-1960s [1]. In the new economy era, brand is referred to as the "fourth business resource" of enterprises beyond human, material, and financial resources. Competition between enterprises has evolved from local product competition, price competition, resource competition, talent competition, technology competition, etc. to overall competition among enterprises, namely brand competition. Brand competition includes various aspects such as the image design of corporate brands and the long-term effective governance of corporate brands. Brands are not only synonymous with corporate products, but also encompass various aspects such as corporate reputation, product quality, and corporate image. Brand is the core element of a company and the main medium for transmitting information to the target market.Brand image theory is an important school of thought in advertising creative strategy theory [2].

Under the influence of this strategic theory, a large number of excellent and successful advertisements have emerged. Brand image is not inherent to a product, but rather a connection between consumers and product quality, price, history, etc. This philosophy holds that every advertisement should be a long-term investment in the entire brand. Therefore, every brand and product should develop and project an image [3]. Using various promotional techniques, especially advertising, to convey images to customers and potential customers. Consumers not only purchase products, but also promise material and psychological benefits [4]. The issues related to the product mentioned in the advertisement are often more important for purchasing decisions than the actual material properties of the product [17].

Regarding brand culture, brand culture is the soul of a brand, the intrinsic spirit of a brand, an intangible asset, and an important component of a company's core competitiveness [6]. Brand culture is the inheritance and innovation of a company's own culture. Brand culture mainly consists of five parts: values, image, emotions, products, and services [5]. The role of corporate brand culture is to build the brand of a company, and in a sense, culture itself is a way of building a brand. That is to say, brand culture is the mind of a brand. Society is constantly progressing, and on the journey of competing with world powers, we must receive new information with a new perspective. Brand culture is an essential condition for enterprises to go global [9]. Once a successful brand culture exists in the minds of consumers, its functions and interests intersect with the values recognized by consumers, transforming intangible cultural values into tangible brand values, cultural wealth into differentiated competitive advantages, and enabling products to stand firm in fierce market competition [10].

Through the dissemination of products and services, emotional identification with products and services is formed, thereby creating strong corporate cohesion. Brand value is the fundamental values advocated by a company or brand,

reflecting the spiritual pursuit and strength of the company or brand. It is the intersection between the intrinsic value of a company or brand and its external image and interests, which not only affects consumers' perception and attitude towards the company or brand image, but also determines whether the company or brand image can be accepted by consumers [7]. From a professional perspective, the core of a brand is functionality and quality. Culture is the collective sublimation of the function and quality of a brand, and it is the manifestation of the highest level and ultimate development of a brand. Brands can already break away from unique marketing forces such as technology, science, and quality, enabling enterprises to remain invincible in fierce competition [8].

Regarding brand positioning, "positioning" refers to the analysis and research of product attributes and values by enterprises to identify differences between themselves and competitors, and systematically sort out these differences to determine the product's position in the market. The so-called "positioning" means finding a place in the minds of consumers and occupying a position. Propose a systematic review of the characteristics of a product or service to differentiate oneself from competitors, thereby occupying a unique position in the minds of consumers and becoming a one-of-a-kind product or service in the market [8]. Corporate culture and brand building are important components of the success of modern enterprises. Corporate culture can provide internal strength and cohesion for brand building, while brand building further conveys and consolidates corporate culture through external image and positioning. Only by organically combining corporate culture with brand building can enterprises stand undefeated in fierce market competition [11].

Price is the most sensitive factor among all products, so the first step in doing a good brand positioning is to do a good job in price positioning. For many consumers, after spending a lot of money, they do not want to spend more money on maintaining the product. What kind of emotional experience can the product bring to people. When shaping a brand, companies should position themselves according to different consumer groups. For example, companies can position their brands based on four different age groups: children, youth, middle-aged, and elderly [13]. When shaping a brand, the company must design packaging for the brand. Due to people's increasing emphasis on product packaging in consumption nowadays, companies need to make the outer packaging of their products more beautiful and exquisite when designing brand packaging. Because people judge the quality, grade, and value of products through packaging, which in turn affects brand building [9]. The success of a brand image depends on how it resonates with consumers and establishes a strong emotional connection. By creating a consistent and recognizable image that reflects brand value and engaging in dialogue with the target audience, companies can establish a loyal customer base and drive long-term success [10].

In view of the brand image design practice under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), relevant scholars proposed the classic pyramid model of corporate social responsibility [3]. Corporate social responsibility is regarded as a structural component that involves four different levels of the relationship between businesses and society, namely "corporate social responsibility includes society's expectations of economic organizations, laws, ethics, and philanthropy during specific periods" [17].

PURPOSE

Purpose of this study is to identify figurative and symbolic means in the development of identity and in the creation of brand image in the context of the values of China's international Belt and Road Initiative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Values of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a holistic framework for economic cooperation and cultural exchanges that can promote connectivity and common development in many countries. This inclusiveness is not only reflected in product design and marketing strategy, but also in the brand's support and advocacy of social diversity [15].

Common Growth, as a core value of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), emphasizes the common advancement of the interests of all parties on the basis of cooperation and inclusiveness. In following this value, brands focus not only on their own development, but also on progressing together with partners, consumers and the communities in which they operate. By investing in education, health and infrastructure in local communities, brands are able to demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility, thereby building a positive social image in the minds of consumers. This long-term, sustainable development strategy helps brands gain wider recognition and support in international markets.

Case Studies. Huawei, a Chinese brand, is a leading global provider of ICT (information

and communications) infrastructure and smart terminals. The Huawei brand's marketing campaign cleverly incorporates interconnected and layered graphic design elements that not only reflect Huawei's technological prowess, but also symbolize the importance of collaborative networks [5].This design concept is in line with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) concept of building a connected world. As shown in Figure 1, these graphics are not only aesthetically pleasing, but also meaningful, as they visually represent Huawei's close-knit relationship with its global partners, as well as its spirit of continuous exploration and innovation in the field of technology.

As shown in Figure 2, Huawei's brand identity in the BRI Initiative's participating regions emphasizes common growth and technological collaboration, which is reflected in the warm-toned color scheme that Huawei employs in its project communications, and the use of curved and flowing lines in its design to symbolize the seamless technological connectivity that it strives to promote. By aligning its brand identity with the Belt and Road Initiative values, Huawei reinforces its role as a connector and facilitator of shared progress, a visual narrative that resonates with the core principles of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Kuaishou is a Chinese brand that serves as a platform for users to record and share their production and life. As shown in Fig. 3, Kuaishou's logo adopts warm colors, a design that not only reflects Kuaishou's brand image, but also aims to more strongly support the continuous development of the community content ecosystem of Racer. With this logo, Racer hopes to better explain its original purpose and future direction, and the Kuaishou brand's philosophy of embracing every life is not only a slogan, but also a commitment to diversity and inclusiveness of the brand's users. This concept coincides with the values of openness, inclusiveness and sharing advocated in the Belt and Road Initiative, and Kuaishou is committed to contributing to the promotion of exchanges and understanding between people of different cultures and backgrounds within the framework of this global initiative [7].

China COSCO Shipping Company Limited, plays a crucial role as a core logistics provider in the Belt and Road Initiative network. As Fig. 4 illustrates, the company occupies the position of a core logistics provider in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) network [9].By skillfully utilizing the connectivity symbol of the wave, China COSCO Shipping Company Limited not only conveys its commitment to connecting markets and

building bridges, but also further reinforces the concept of connectivity in the core values ofthe Belt and Road Initiative, reflecting its important position and role in global trade.

Design Practices. The BRI is a development model based on the role of our country's famous ancient Silk Road, which can better adapt to the current international economic development and cultural and economic exchanges in various fields. The emergence of this model can not only promote exchanges and exchanges between countries along the BRI and our countries in economic, political, cultural and other fields, but also connect these countries into an organic whole with shared interests, destiny and responsibilities through the BRI. The proposal of the BRI has also had a profound impact on our national brand design field, and further urged the reform and improvement of brand image and brand design in related fields.

By visually manifesting these core ideas, brands associated with the BRI can establish a unique presence that not only stands out but also resonates with the collective aspirations of global unity and collaboration that BRI promotes. This fusion promotes a visual language that conveys mutual respect, trust and partnership to appeal to global consumers.

Collaboration through interlocking patterns. The interlocking pattern symbolizes the close ties between different countries and cultures and conveys a dynamic and evolving partnership. This design method can make the brand image more vivid, and at the same time stimulate the audience to identify with the spirit of cooperation. The interlocking pattern design also inspires people to imagine the possibilities of future cooperation, thus psychologically resonating with the goals of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) [16]. Through well-designed interlocking patterns, the brand not only demonstrates its recognition of the values of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but also visually appeals to the target audience and enhances the brand's memorability [17].

To better reflect the spirit of cooperation promoted by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), brands can subtly incorporate interlocking or interwoven patterns into their design elements [18]. As illustrated in Figure 5, such patterns not only symbolize cooperation and mutual support, but also visually represent the close ties and interdependence between various countries and communities. Through the representation of circles, paths, and colors, we can visualize the vision of global solidarity and collaboration advocated by the Belt and Road Initiative. The clever use of patterns not only

Fig. 1. Huawei's City Intelligence Body Creates New Look for County Smart Cities, China, 2022 [13]

Fig. 2. Huawei Helps Operators Achieve Business Success in the Digital Age, China, 2024 [14]

Fig. 3. Kuaishou Logo [18]

Fig. 4. COSCO Logo [5]

enhances the visual impact, but also invisibly conveys a positive message that no matter how big or small the countries are and how different their cultures are, they can all work together to achieve common development goals.

As shown in Fig. 6, a logistics company operating on the Belt and Road could adopt a logo with intertwined lines that converge at a central point, symbolizing how different entities and players from around the world are united and working together for a common goal. The logo will convey the brand's role as a central facilitator of international cooperation, with each line representing a different country, cultural element or logistical corridor, all of which are separate yet closely linked to form a complete network. When the lines intersect in the logo, they not only create a dynamic aesthetic visually, but also symbolize the close cooperation and exchange between different countries and regions. This design skillfully embodies the spirit of cooperation across borders, cultures and geographic barriers, and further strengthens the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)'s goal of connecting different regions and promoting interconnectivity.

Fig. 5. Interlocking Pattern Design: Yuan Peijie

Fig. 6. Interweave Design: Yuan Peijie

Inclusiveness and warm colors. The inclusiveness of the design is achieved through the harmonious combination of colors and graphics. Color gradients and layering add visual depth and richness. For example, Figure 7 shows a warm color gradient from light to dark, creating a warm and cozy visual effect and making the brand image more three-dimensional and vivid. The warm gradient guides the flow of the eye, enhances visual guidance, and effectively conveys the brand message [21]. The combination of warm and cool colors in Figure 7 creates a warm and harmonious brand image through color contrast and balance. This color combination reflects the inclusiveness and diversity of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and demonstrates the robustness and maturity of the brand in the process of internationalization. The design strategy integrates the brand with the values of the Belt and Road Initiative and conveys a positive, open and inclusive brand image.

Brands that use warm color designs, such as logos, websites, or packaging, quickly communicate inclusivity. This design strategy is effective in fostering a sense of belonging and approachability, so that audiences feel the brand's warmth and friendliness. As shown in Fig. 8, BRI-aligned tourism companies can adopt a warm brand palette that communicates inclusion and openness to international visitors. Warm colors attract visual attention and convey a positive message that the brand welcomes global travelers [19]. Incorporating warm tones into digital platforms and physical touchpoints demonstrates a spirit of warm welcome.

Warm colors can stimulate people's positive emotions and make them feel energetic. In office or commercial spaces, warm toned layouts can help boost people's morale and work efficiency. In addition, using warm colors in educational environments can also stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm for learning. In visual design, warm colors have a certain guiding effect. In large public spaces or exhibition areas, the clever use of warm tones can guide people's gaze and highlight the key display points. At the same time, warm colors can also create a contrast with other colors, enhancing the effect of conveying information.

Whether it's through websites, social media, advertisements, or physical storefronts, brochures and packaging, the use of warm colors is effective in attracting the target audience. This design strategy not only enhances brand recognition, but also leaves a lasting impression in the minds of the audience. When audiences see warm tones, they feel an intangible invitation that inspires to explore new destinations and experience different cultures and landscapes. Warm color design also conveys a message of inclusion and respect, allowing people from different regions and with different backgrounds to feel the brand's warmth and care. By doing so, the brand not only attracts more international travelers, but also creates a positive, inclusive and open image in their minds.

Unity and Symbols of Connectivity. In order to realize the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)'s value of common growth, representative symbols are selected for the design, and these elements not only have strong visual unity, but also broad cultural connectivity. For example, the use of trade symbols and cultural symbols represents the vision of the Belt and Road Initiative to promote economic cooperation and cultural exchange [20]. In addition, the design incorporates metaphorical symbols, such as bridges and ties, which visually convey the concept of connectivity and cooperation and emphasize the inter connectivity between different countries and regions. Through these well-designed visual elements, the brand identity was able to maintain its uniqueness while growing together with the core values of the Belt and Road Initiative.

Connected circles, paths and roads form intuitive visual symbols. In fig. 9, the various interconnected communities and economies

Fig. 7. Inclusiveness Design: Yuan Peijie

Fig. 8. Warm Color Design: Yuan Peijie

involved in the Belt and Road Initiative are expressed through the use of interconnected circles. This visual expression not only emphasizes the strong ties between these communities and economies, but also further reinforces the values of solidarity and partnership [21]. Through this visual symbol, we can more intuitively understand how the Belt and Road Initiative can jointly promote global prosperity and development by fostering cooperation and exchanges among different countries and regions.

The bridge metaphor is very effective in communicating partnership and mutual support. Bridges physically connect disparate entities and, when used in brand design, symbolize the removal of barriers and access to connections. A brand that incorporates the visual of a bridge can effectively communicate its role in facilitating the crossing of cultural, economic or geographic divides.

Construction companies involved in Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure projects may include images of bridges or roads in their branding elements [22]. This visual connection can be subtle, such as a line extending across their logo that resembles a bridge or highway, symbolizing the company's mission to connect regions through tangible structures. This not only highlights the company's alignment with the goals of the Belt and Road Initiative, but also reinforces the company's commitment to creating lasting, impactful infrastructure for solidarity.

Fintech companies serving the Belt and Road Initiative could incorporate a bridge symbol in their application or platform design to represent their role in connecting consumers to global financial opportunities, as shown in figure 10. This design choice emphasizes the company's role in removing financial barriers and promoting global economic unity, reflecting the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)'s commitment to enhancing connectivity on multiple fronts.

Financial services firms can also reinforce this visual symbol through their brand communication strategies.

Bridges represent peace and harmony. In addition, the construction and design features of the bridge give it long-lasting and stable characteristics, thus imbuing it with a spiritual meaning of peace and harmony. In advertising and marketing materials, use images of bridges to symbolically demonstrate how their services cross geographical boundaries and connect users in different countries and regions [23]. Through storytelling, companies can further elaborate on how their financial innovations help customers overcome obstacles to personal and business financial growth. This strategy not only deepens consumers' understanding of the brand's mission, but also strengthens the connection between the brand and the Belt and Road Initiative to achieve the goal of mutual growth.

CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, the Belt and Road Initiative market development needs to focus on brand building, establish a good brand image and brand influence, so as to improve the market competitiveness and popularity of enterprises and create greater development space. Enterprises need to adopt corresponding brand strategies and measures, making brand building an important part of their development strategy, continuously improving brand value and quality, and promoting further development and growth of the enterprise.

Crafting a Cohesive Brand Identity that Reflects BRI Values. Through the use of interconnected symbols, warm and inclusive color palettes, and shapes that evoke a sense of unity, brands are able to build visual identities that embody the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)'s core values of cooperation, inclusiveness, and shared growth.

A well-conceived brand identity design can effectively convey the brand's consistency

Fig. 9. Warm Color Design: Yuan Peijie

Fig. 10. Inclusiveness Design: Yuan Peijie

with the values of the Belt and Road Initiative and make the brand stand out in the global market [24]. A brand identity is not only a visual symbol, but also a visualization of the brand's culture and values [25]. By incorporating symbolic elements, regional characteristics and innovative design concepts, a brand identity can tell a story about the brand's history, vision and commitment. In the context of the Belt and Road Initiative, the design of a brand identity needs to take into account cross-cultural communication and understanding, to ensure that audiences from different cultural backgrounds can feel the positive messages and values conveyed by the brand. A successful brand identity design under the Belt and Road Initiative will be a visual symbol that can cross language and cultural barriers and convey the brand's mission and values.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Юань Пейцзє, Кротова Т. Образно-символічні засоби візуалізації ідеї глобальної солідарності та співпраці в айдентиці бренду

Мета дослідження: виявити образно-символічні засоби у розробці айдентики та у створенні іміджу бренду в контексті цінностей міжнародної ініціативи Китаю «Один пояс, один шлях».

Методологія. Дослідження було проведено з використанням поєднання теоретичних розвідок і практики дизайну. Теоретичне дослідження використовується для того, щоб зрозуміти, як існуючі бренди відображають цінності Ініціативи «Один пояс, один шлях» у практичному застосуванні. Дизайн-практика ґрунтується на аналізі кейсів для подальшої перевірки та вдосконалення запропонованої стратегії дизайну іміджу бренду, отже, були використані методи аналізу, синтезу, порівняння та обробки інформації.

Результати. Було виявлено, що дизайн іміджу бренду, який відповідає основним цінностям ініціативи «Один пояс, один шлях», може значно підвищити впізнаваність і репутацію бренду у відповідних країнах і регіонах. Включення цінностей співпраці, інклюзивності та спільного зростання в якості основних елементів дизайну не тільки посилює емоційний зв'язок між брендом і цільовою аудиторією, а й сприяє взаєморозумінню і повазі в крос-культурному контексті. Обґрунтовано та запропоновано нові перспективи та ідеї щодо дизайну іміджу бренду, який має відігравати певну роль у донесенні цінностей ініціативи «Один пояс, один шлях», формуванні лояльності до бренду та сприянні міжкультурному спілкуванню і взаєморозумінню.

Наукова новизна. У дослідженні пропонується стратегія дизайну, що відповідає основним цінностям, яка надає нові ідеї та напрямки для розвитку брендів на глобальному ринку. Запропоновані в цьому дослідженні стратегії дизайну мають не лише теоретичну цінність, але й важливе практичне значення і можуть стати науково обґрунтованими практичними рекомендаціями та орієнтирами для глобальних брендів.

Практична значущість. Дослідження сприятиме міжкультурній комунікації та взаєморозумінню між аудиторіями в країнах і регіонах уздовж «Поясу і шляху», а також сприятиме зміцненню взаєморозуміння і поваги в різних культурних контекстах. Обґрунтовано і запропоновано дизайн-рішення для натхнення та просування глобального співробітництва брендів задля економічного процвітання та культурних обмінів.

<u>*Ключові слова:*</u> *графічний дизайн, айдентика бренду, образно-символічні засоби, ініціатива «Один пояс, один шлях», співпраця, інклюзивність, імідж бренду, стратегія дизайну.*

АВТОРСЬКА ДОВІДКА:

Юань Пейцзє, аспірантка, кафедра мистецтва та дизайну костюма, Київський національний університет технологій та дизайну, Київ, Україна, e-mail: e-mail: 382865431@qq.com, orcid: 0009-0000-8621-5907.

Кротова Тетяна, доктор мистецтвознавства, професор кафедри мистецтва та дизайну костюма, Київський національний університет технологій та дизайну, Київ, Україна, e-mail: krotova_t@ukr.net, orcid: 0000-0003-2282-0029.