



# Current State of Packaging Design in the National Design Trends

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National design trends increasingly favor traditional Chinese culture, with many brands combining it with packaging design to revive their products. However, there are still many problems with using elements on the packaging. This paper attempts to provide a systematic literature review of national design trends, packaging design, and traditional cultural elements. Based on Creswell's five-step way of writing reviews, Identify the relationship and research gaps among the three. These studies show that they are in an interactive relationship. With national design trends empowering packaging design, packaging design being the communication medium for national design trends, and traditional cultural elements being the transformative expression of both. And explore the natural links between dim sum packaging and national design trends. previous studies, the results of which are numerous and fragmented. This paper combed out a more comprehensive research status to help follow up on the gaps and potential opportunities in packaging design in the context of national design trends and to further clarify the focus and direction of future research.

**Keywords:** *National design trends, packaging design, traditional cultural elements*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last thirty years, many examples of effective visual communication have been collected in literature and writings (Leborg, C, 2006; Tufte et al., 1998). At the same time, images are symbols that evoke specific images, thoughts, feelings, objects, and more (Andreea-Constantina, 2021). Different images thus generate other emotions and values, interconnected with culture. Cultural symbols are mnemonics that resonate emotionally with groups (Heersmink, 2021). In China, behind social phenomena such as "the revival of old domestic products" and "Local culture is in vogue" is people's attention to traditional culture. Reviewing the rise of new consumer brands in recent years, many brand investors and industry scholars have mentioned this keyword – national design trend (Zhang Qu, 2021; Yang Jiyun et al., 2021). It is generally believed that the "national design trend" refers to a consumer trend of "Chinese design, Chinese products, and Chinese culture" based on national self-confidence and cultural identity, where local brands blend traditional culture with modern trend elements to give their products a new aesthetic and definition (Liu et al., 2022).

This paper will take national design trends as a starting point, using something more national in character, combined with packaging as a medium to articulate better and promote: In the traditional Chinese custom, dim sum has an essential and special meaning to the Chinese people, not only as part of traditional snacks but also as a regional culture, and that the birth and popularity of Chinese dim sum are closely related to culture, rituals, and beliefs (Xiao, 2022). Secondly, commercially available dim sum packaging uses elements that highlight cultural heritage as a marketing tool to enhance the human value of the dim sum. Therefore, during this review, an attempt has been made to identify the relationship between dim sum packaging and national design trends. To use this as a carrier to create a more systematic summary of the current research and provide decision-making guidance for combining national design trends and traditional cultural elements through packaging design in the future.

## 2. METHODS

This literature review is based on Creswell's five-step literature search and analysis process (Creswell, J. W, 2012). It synthesizes relevant current research findings to identify relationships and research gaps between national design trends, packaging design, and traditional cultural elements.

- Identify the search subject term.
- Multiple databases are consulted, and relevant journals and literature are collected.



The authors need to review the variables separately.

- Summarize the interrelationships and interactions between variables and variables in the paper.
- Create a visual framework to organize the selected literature and present a conclusion.
- Write a systematic literature review summarizing the above work.

### **3. CURRENT RESEARCH STUDIES**

#### **3.1 National Design Trends**

Current academic research on national design trends has three dominant concerns: i. In the cultural and social sphere, The main focus is on the current state of the contemporary cultural inheritance of national design trends; ii. in the field of brand management, the perspective focuses on the classification and marketing strategies of local brands; iii. in the field of design, the presentation of visual elements and the analysis of design strategies are usually the main contents.

#### **i. The current state of the contemporary cultural inheritance of national design trends**

From the perspective of branding and cultural heritage, a part of the scholars focused on arguing that the development of brands under the national design trend has to rely on culture, emphasizing that most of the old Chinese brands have more brand heritage because they have many history and heritage stories (Dai et al., 2021; Balmer et al., 2016). In similar circumstances, Professor Mats Urde et al. (Urde et al., 2007) have identified how to identify a brand's cultural heritage and how to nurture, maintain and protect it. And it is also mentioned that the reflections and expressions obtained through symbols have a deeper meaning when it comes to the communication of brand culture. Just as the cultural underpinnings of a brand are a visual signal used by the enterprise et al., Enterprises often use their history and culture in their marketing campaigns to convince consumers to buy their products (Hakala et al., 2011). Steenkamp agrees that brands should combine their products with local culture to gain a competitive advantage (E M Steenkamp et al., 2003).

#### **ii. Brand categorization and marketing strategies in the context of national design trends**

As local brands follow national design trends and continue to evolve, existing product formats and user needs are trending toward greater segmentation. If divided by product content and carrier, the categories of local brands under the national design trends can be



separated from 6 aspects: (1) new national brands; (2) Revival of old national products; (3) Return of quintessence; (4) Chinese cultural and creative products; (5) Crossover co-branding; (6) Chinese marketing (Liu, 2021). Based on information from current research institutions, Liang Yan et al. take a slightly different view, summarizing the categorization of 'national design trend' brands in terms of the 'brand power' of clothing brands. They were divided into New National Products, New National Returns, New National Styles, New National Quintessence, New Culture (Liang et al., 2022). These categories do not have strict boundaries, and the attributes of the types will be adjusted according to the size and content of the brand. Still, regardless of the category, there is currently a clear cultural trend in relation to National Design Trends brands, and this trend is being served by marketing.

While the above brand classifications are explained at a macro level, several recent studies have been based on a micro perspective to examine which factors in national design trends are the current marketing priorities. Many researchers have shown traditional, nostalgic elements to influence consumer attitudes and behavior toward brands in Western countries (Özhan et al., 2020). In China, abundant research reveals that 'nostalgia' and 'innovation' are the dominant research issues surrounding the content of time-honored brands under the 'national design trends' (Shi, 2022; Su Zhan, 2022). To argue from an objective standpoint, Schroeder et al. (Schroeder et al., 2015) note that Chinese consumers' engagement with brands is conducive to developing the 'new China' and new cultural forms worldwide. And Zhang Shuning et al. (S.-N. Zhang et al., 2021) constructed and examined the word-of-mouth pathway of long-established brands from a consumer word-of-mouth perspective, which is influenced by mediating mechanisms such as response (interest arousal), cognition (brand experience), and emotion (brand identity). For this reason, some researchers believe it is essential to match users' individual needs precisely, focus on the scene immersion experience, and grasp consumer behavioral characteristics (Guo, 2022). In this sense, the National Design Trend is a trend for Chinese brands to blend traditional culture and fashion elements for marketing communications. For brands, the first is based on China's unique consumer habits and market, and the second is the marketing communication in terms of brand visual system design and other aspects, incorporating traditional cultural elements to achieve marketing objectives. This strategy applies to categories closely related to Chinese culture (Ma, 2021).



### **iii. Expression of design elements and analysis of design strategies for national design trends**

#### **(1) Expression of design elements of national design trends**

The national design trends are a visual pictorial practice, embodied in the representation of traditional Chinese folklore or culture in modern symbols, which ideologically point to the process of generating new meanings for visual and cultural symbols (Liao Hongyong et al., 2021). Previous studies have focused on the choice of "font," "graphics," or "color," which have the following characteristics: The fonts contain Chinese aesthetics, often using the symbols "Simsun" or "hieroglyphic," and the four types of fonts used in calligraphy, namely "Running script, Cursive script, Clerical Script, Standard Script"; The graphics or symbols are extracted from traditional patterns, traditional architecture, traditional costumes, traditional folklore, and more.; The colors are either taken from the traditional concept of color, or the material's color itself is retained and then the design is expressed (Li Rongyao, 2021; Kong et al., 2021). The discussion in terms of the evolution of national design trends over time can be further divided into The design elements of the old national products present "metaphors," while the design elements of the new national products are represented by "Synecdoche. " The design element style of the national design trend embodies the symbol (Gao, 2022). As a result, a new brand perception design is formed in the design.

#### **(2) Analysis of design strategies for national design trends**

In terms of design strategies, the research focuses on the technical strategy layer and the theoretical strategy layer. At the level of technical methods, the deconstructionist theories of French deconstructionist Jacques Derrida have inspired researchers to deconstruct and reconstruct traditional cultural symbols (Lin et al., 2022; Zheng et al., 2019). These strategies provide a logical way to use design elements. However, Some researchers point to the need to tap into more profound theories as a guide and then recreate them. Thus, at the level of theoretical strategies, based on the definition of national design trends and Contagion Theory (Belk, 1988), The essence of this strategy is to use multiple cultural representations based on national cultural archetypes to deepen the brand's association with the national culture (Ye Weiling et al., 2021). Moreover, they claim that the 'creativity' of the strategy is a vital element of the research and that there are several core points about creativity, namely originality, novelty, applicability, and functionality (Burroughs et al., 2004; Amabile et al., 1996). Xiang Yong et al. propose to design the shape at the form level, give the product or brand cultural meaning at the



content level, choose different materials to superimpose aesthetic elements at the material level and sublimate the spirit at the scene level. Finally, the relationship domain guides the symbiosis of values, which can complete the brand's aesthetic value-building and cultural meaning (Xiang et al., 2017).

### **3.2 Packaging Design**

#### **i. Modern Packaging Design Principles**

Candace Ellicott and Sarah Roncarelli mention: when thinking of the first-ever packaging, the only packaging designs that come to mind are hollowed-out gourds or animal skins. But for today's packaging designers, Unlimited techniques, resources, and skills can significantly be applied to packaging design (Ellicott, C et al., 2010). For example, the Pentawards Design Competition, created in 2007, is a global design award focusing on packaging design. Through analyzing the award-winning works, Wang Hui extracted that the mainstream design principles of global packaging today are sustainable design concepts, brand culture design concepts, personalized design concepts, and interactive design concepts (Wang Hui, 2022). Some scholars believe that one of the most common ways to achieve an aesthetically pleasing package is to apply the laws of graphic design. They tested three different aesthetic levels of packaging using contrast, dominance, alignment, symmetry, consistency, and color harmony. The findings show that designers who consciously apply design principles to packaging can create aesthetically pleasing visual designs (Croatia et al., 2020). The packaging's colors, fonts, and labels have also been considered critical to the design of the packaging and the consumer's evaluation of the brand (Crilly et al., 2004). Brands often use different design elements to convey specific messages and help designers to see these elements as guidelines (Celhay, Magnier, et al., 2020). In the packaging design field in China, many scholars favor using traditional symbols and patterns to express meaning, and they generally believe that integrating tradition with modernity is a popular trend in packaging design today (Wei, 2021; Hu, 2020; Shen, 2021). Furthermore, the functional aspects of packaging, such as environmental protection and sustainability, are also emphasized (Elkhattat, D et al., 2022). Ziyet Boz et al. also realize that sustainability has become an essential function of packaging, guaranteeing food quality and safety and facilitating transport logistics (Boz et al., 2020) (Keränen et al., 2021). Overall, the principles of modern packaging design provide a guiding light for the following research work.



## **ii. Food Packaging Design**

This study links traditional Chinese cultural elements and national design trends using dim sum packaging as a vehicle. Therefore, The researcher will trace back to food packaging design, which draws out the dim sum packaging design research.

In the area of materials science for food packaging, Sara J. Risch discusses the history of food packaging and the process of material innovations that have brought convenience and higher-quality food to consumers (Risch, 2009). While the materials used in food packaging are necessary, the audience for food packaging should be the consumer. The research focused on focus group interviews to learn that the design elements prioritized to promote consumer understanding were text, shape, image, and color (Wang et al., 2009). However, the findings of Antonija kovakei et al. suggest that fonts did not influence participants' preferences; instead, graphics, patterns, and colors had a significant effect on choice (Croatia et al., 2019). However, Watcharatorn Pensasitorn emphasizes that the most appropriate design for food and beverage packaging is photography and that the most suitable image presentation for food and beverage packaging design is "an image that shows the product name, trademark or brand name" (Pensasitorn, 2015). This view, by contrast, has led many Chinese researchers to differ. They generally believe that new-era packaging design should highlight a concept or culture beyond packaging. Traditional cultural elements are the source of inspiration for food packaging ( M. Zhang et al., 2019)

## **iii. Dim sum packaging design**

The focus of Chinese dim sum packaging design will be on cultural connotation, image shaping, and symbol extraction, and the corresponding optimization solutions will be proposed (Zhang Yujiang, 2008). For example, dim sum packaging design is based on specific Chinese cultural elements, such as calligraphy and folklore elements ( Shi, 2021;Li Xuqin, 2020; Gan Jinxiu et al., 2009). Chen Tingting conducted data collection for a specific dim sum packaging. However, according to the consumer psychology of middle-aged people, its sample is middle-aged people for the dim sum packaging of traditional and modern integration of paving( Chen Tingting, 2015). With the gradual downward shift of the age stage of the consumer market, Ye Bixuan's sample differs from those mentioned above in that it finds that young people are the mainstream dim sum consumers, Identifying the importance of branding and providing a new reference point for visual identity building and development ( Ye Bixuan, 2022). A dim sum not only exists as food in China but also carries an essential ideological and cultural significance, so emotional design will become an inevitable trend in dim sum packaging design( Zhang



Qiaomei et al.,2009).

### **3.3 Traditional cultural elements**

#### **i. Methods for extracting traditional cultural elements**

A growing body of research suggests that designers refer to culture as a method of design. In modern product design, designers rarely start from scratch but modify existing cultures or products(Eckert, C. M.,2005). This requires designers to have the ability to extract elements. At present, most studies on the extraction of traditional cultural elements fall into two categories, one is based on the characteristics of traditional culture to explore how to extract and draw on conventional cultural factors, and this type of article will describe the current design trends and issues, with the help of various cultural carriers to demonstrate, but the limitation is the lack of conceptual framework or theoretical models for support, Unable to see the element extraction process (Y. Li, 2021); The other category is to develop theoretical models to guide practice based on the former. Because this study focuses more on the process of extracting traditional cultural elements, this paper will draw more on ideas from the second category of literature.

In the second category, researchers have proposed a model for the extraction of traditional cultural elements using F-AHP (FuzzyAnalytic Hierarchy Process) and entropy computation to compensate for the lack of a systematic and efficient design methodology to guide the design practice of cultural product design(Y. Hu et al., 2021). However, this model also has certain limitations. For example, only the product's shape is considered when extracting cultural elements, but not the pattern, color, material, and other aspects are analyzed. Richie Moalosi and partners identify and articulate cultural factors in Botswana to expand new experiences for designers and develop a culturally oriented design model to incorporate the user's culture(Moalosi et al., 2010). This study provides a method for analyzing and integrating socio-cultural factors in the early design stages, but there is no analysis of cultural connotations. Lee, Y. J. (Lee, 2010), Yeh et al. (Yeh et al., 2011), and Moalosi's studies are all based on a particular regional culture. They use elements of Taiwan's regional culture to develop design products. Among them, the research model of Yeh et al. adopts the model proposed by Professor Rungtai Lin(Lin,2007). He established a model that combines the three layers, levels, and design features of cultural objects. Although no field survey and interviews were conducted with the aboriginal people of Taiwan, on the whole, its process of extracting cultural elements is worthy of reference.





## **ii. Expression and transformation of traditional cultural elements**

Some researchers pointed out that Southeast Asia's culture, traditions, and values are being damaged in the process of globalization. And the country's people are responsible for maintaining local cultural features (Ullah et al., 2021). Wayang Topeng Malang (Malang Mask Puppet) is one of Malang's traditional arts, but many local teenagers often ignore it because they prefer modern culture. Hence, the designer changed the visual style of it to make it more in line with popular culture Combined to appeal to the target group (Novica et al., 2020). At the same time, China is facing a similar trend. Culture helps brands retain their users. The use of Chinese cultural elements in modern design is an extension and re-creation of culture, as demonstrated in numerous design cases. In this way, the researcher analyses the use of traditional auspicious motifs in terms of their "form," "meaning," and "verve" and hopes that designers should be aware of different cultures and taboos to better connect with different times and cultural backgrounds. (Han, 2014). Jin combines traditional cultural elements with modern dynamic visual design, exploring new ways of expressing traditional cultural elements (Jin, 2019). Based on this, Lv and Yang emphasized that harmony, terse and implicit are The artistic direction of product modeling. Lines and shapes can convey meaning, and patterns and colors can express emotions (Lv et al., 2015). At present, the use of traditional cultural elements for expression and transformation is actually polarized. Compared to award-winning niche works, mass-produced products are directly superficial use of elements. Using traditional cultural elements is still a problem to be solved (Chang et al., 2011).

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 The Relationship Among National Design Trends, Packaging Design, And Traditional Cultural Elements**

The term 'national design trends' has become a hot topic recently. Scholars generally agree that the cultural value of national design trends is There is no doubt about the cultural value of national design trends. However, national culture is a highly abstract concept. The national culture that the brand draws on is a national cultural archetype. Representations of national cultural archetypes are cultural elements or symbols often presented through the design medium. The relationship among national design trends, packaging design, and traditional cultural elements can therefore be summarized as a complementary relationship, with national design trends empowering packaging design, packaging design being the communication medium for national design trends, and traditional cultural elements being the transformative expression of both.



### **i. National design trends empowering packaging design**

The cultural attributes reflected in national design trends can empower packaging design because packaging design is a kind of visual culture. Many scholars point out that packaging is one of the essential mediums of cultural transmission and consumer communication, reflecting a country's culture and particular consumer culture. More and more packaging in recent years has combined national design trends to focus on reflecting the spiritual power of traditional culture in their design while also conveying a profound emotional influence to consumers. This goes far beyond the functional role of protection and transport that packaging has and gives it a greater scope of possibilities(Hu, 2021).

It has been argued that Chinese society is in a period of change from a "Totalitarian Society" to an "Individualized Society "( He Pingli, 2014). As the consumption concept of the "post-90s" and "post-00s" is gradually changing, the youth group as a new force is more eager to establish a unique personality. They break through the traditional consumption pattern and form a new consumption concept. National design trends can satisfy their recognition of fashion trends and their perception of "national, "which is the emotional support and spiritual resonance of their pursuit of individuality and fashion (Xing,2021). "National Design Trends" is one of the most popular art forms today. Combining national design trends with packaging design can differentiate a brand from other ordinary packaging in the market and create a unique brand image(Wu, 2020). Hence, the empowerment of national design trends in packaging design is based on traditional culture and expressed by contemporary trend culture, giving the packaging intangible functions from function to form.

### **ii. packaging design as a communication medium for national design trends**

A product (packaging) is a fashion symbol, a cultural symbol, and a symbol of life. Nowadays, more and more packaging is responsible for disseminating Chinese, traditional, and contemporary cultures. Some scholars believe that the style embodied in this packaging design is called the "new Chinese style." To a certain extent, they generally believe that the new Chinese-style packaging can solve the problems of lack of innovation of traditional elements in Chinese packaging design, excessive use of traditional elements, or lack of understanding of national culture( Wang Xiaolin, 2013). As a medium, it is a rendition of the traditional Chinese connotation in the current context, highlighting the modern "new," i.e., new ideas, new techniques, new materials, and new needs; secondly, focusing on the traditional "Chinese," i.e., Chinese culture, Chinese aesthetics, and Chinese style( Huang Boheng et al., 2019). Actually, from the above



review, it appears that national design trends and the new Chinese style are interlinked, and ultimately the common ground between the two lies in the development of cultural packaging that meets modern consumer trends and aesthetics.

### **iii. Cultural elements are transformative expressions of both**

To be adept at using rich traditional cultural elements in design and fully understanding the dialectical relationship between inheritance and development of national elements in the packaging (Liu Huimin, 2020). Some researchers have explored the contemporary innovation of cultural elements in the design of Republican-era packaging design (Lu et al., 2019; Geng et al., 2021). LiteZhao used research methods such as data collection and case studies to innovate its packaging with local cultural elements (L. Zhao, 2021). Zhi Yang (Zhi, 2011) and Xu Ruihua (Xu, 2008) analyze the transformation of traditional cultural elements in packaging design based on national design trends. Although the authors consciously mention that traditional cultural elements be based on the designer's aesthetic judgment, the designer's thought processes and specific practical perspectives are not documented or described. This shows that old packaging and graphic design cannot bring life to a brand with a long history. Still, if cultural elements are used cleverly to innovate and transform the packaging, It can better breathe powerful life into a brand.

### **4.2 The natural link between dim sum packaging and national design trends**

Dim Sum is a cultural link between people, heart and mind, past and present. The previous literature on national design trends shows that national design trends are also primarily associated with popular nostalgia and retrospection, collective memory, cultural identity, and folk beliefs, which indicates that dim sum and national design trends influence each other. Actually, the packaging design of dim sum is more in line with national design trends than the dim sum itself. These dim sum packages serve as cultural ambassadors while satisfying people's visual and personal needs (Hu Xueting, 2022). Moreover, the combination of national design trends and dim sum packaging has quickly created a communication momentum for which many consumers are willing to spend, and there are plenty of design examples on the market to analyze in relation to this. Therefore, using dim sum packaging as a vehicle in future research will better illustrate the advantages of combining national design trends with traditional cultural elements.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Looking at the classification of research gaps according to Anthony M (Anthony M, 2020) and the current research framework (Fig. 1), three main research gaps were found to exist among national design trends, packaging design, and traditional cultural elements, which are summarised as follows:



Fig.1 Research Framework

### i. Practical-Knowledge Gap

National design trends, packaging design, and traditional cultural elements have all made excellent and rich contributions to their respective topics. Still, the practical research combining all three of them has so far been at a primary stage. National design trends are mainly focused on areas such as social culture, brand management, and design studies, which are generally more oriented toward branding and marketing or descriptive discussions of this cultural phenomenon. The focus on traditional cultural elements has concentrated on the methods and applications of element extraction in the product field. Many valuable models have been proposed by scholars on this topic, resulting in a variety



of product design solutions and deepening theories on the shape, function, and structure of products. But for packaging, these models may only be used as a reference. The fit is still inadequate when it comes to solving practical problems because, to a certain extent, consumers' first impressions of a product often come from the packaging, and the particular characteristics of the packaging itself all serve a purpose that it cannot achieve for the product it is packaged in. This is, therefore, an important and worthwhile issue.

## **ii. Knowledge Gap**

The writer reviewed three perspectives on the principles of contemporary packaging design, the first being from the perspective of the packaging itself and sustainability; The second is related to brand culture, personalization, and interactive marketing; the third is the integration of the visual aspect of the image with the laws of graphic design. However, these packaging design principles generally lack a principle of keeping up with national design trends and combining the selection, transformation, and application of traditional cultural connotations, resulting in the lack of a diversified design style at this stage. Secondly, when summarizing the literature on food packaging design, the author found that food packaging in other countries focuses on transmitting images and information. In China, more attention is paid to the cultural significance of packaging design and the use of cultural elements. This situation is evident in the literature on dim sum packaging, where cultural connotations, symbol extraction, and image shaping are the focus of Chinese packaging design. The current situation is that academic articles on dim sum packaging incorporating national design trends and traditional cultural elements focus on culture and transformation but lack the information characteristics of dim sum and are less relevant to the fundamental laws of food packaging. The principle of selecting cultural elements suitable for entry into the food field in future design, rather than aimlessly and randomly selecting Chinese elements, is actually equally crucial for packaging in other categories. Therefore, a more systematic principle for dealing with traditional culture and modern design using dim sum packaging as a sample is lacking under this knowledge gap.

## **iii. Methodological Gap**

At this stage, most of these articles have realized the importance of grasping the cultural elements and analyzing them more regarding historical context, craft techniques, aesthetics, and more. However, in terms of results, the methods used and the paradigms developed in the studies usually describe strategies and extract elements from a subjective perspective or put themselves in the position of designers to judge the combination of



elements, packaging, and national design trends, and then present them with the help of carriers, and rarely study the design process in depth with objective methods. Alternatively, some researchers have noted the importance of reducing bias and using objective research methods. For example, many studies now focus on the consumer's perspective, using questionnaires, interviews, and scenario approaches to understand consumers' authentic experiences and needs. But, this method also has certain drawbacks: it seldom records the designer's behavior and judgment when selecting elements or does not conduct interviews or observations with experts in related fields. Given this, interviews or observations of experts and designers should be added to the methodological gap, which would go some way to resolving the conflict between the current and previous research methods and provide a more objective and professional perspective on the argument.

In summary, previous studies, the results of which are numerous and fragmented. This paper combed out a more comprehensive research status to help follow up on the gaps and potential opportunities in packaging design in the context of national design trends and to further clarify the focus and direction of future research.

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