

Application of Illustrations in Commercial Products*

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Abstract—In the current social environment of hi-tech digital media technology application, digital painting art gradually emerges in illustration field of art painting and has penetrated into commercial product applications and people's daily lives. This article mainly expounds and analyzes in six aspects such as the trend of applying illustrations in commerce, the application scope of illustrations in commerce, the expression form of illustration in commodity application, and the strategies for using illustrations in commerce. It is hoped to provide relevant theoretical basis for future research on the application of illustrations in commercial products.

Keywords: *illustration, commercial product, digital painting, application*

I. INTRODUCTION

Illustration is not only a painting art but is also commonly used in commercial product advertising in form of visual art. The application of illustration in commercial products has its evolutionary process. With the advancement of the times and the development of digital technology, illustration is no longer the work created in traditional painting forms but an application of computer digital painting combined with photography technology. This way can obtain more creative freedom in space and present a trend of diversified development. By using hi-tech digital painting methods, the illustrations can have a strong visual impact. Moreover, illustrations have been applied in current commercial products and recognized by extensive consumers. This perfect combination of art and commerce has gradually been accepted by merchants and consumers. The application forms of illustrations on commercial products can be roughly classified into four types: application in publications, application in movies and television and games, application in advertising business, and application in mascots and animated cartoons.

Illustration applied in commercial product should have the function of advertising the product while achieving the purpose for commercial consumption. However, merchant may change the product design at any time, because the

advertising effect of illustration in a commercial product is short-lived. Commercial products may also be replaced with the development and increasingly updating of science and technology. So, illustration applied in commercial product needs to be constantly updated to meet consumer needs, and also have economic benefits. Therefore, this article mainly studies the role and development of illustration application in commercial products from the perspective of economic benefits.

Since the application of illustration in commercial product, it has evolved in its own way and been commonly used in various art forms. Illustration shows its unique artistic charm in the form of visual arts, and also plays a vital role in today's business operations. The role of illustration in commerce is no longer simply "explanation with pictures", but be expanded to more areas of business propagation. Commercial illustration has gradually become one of the popular forms of commercial art expression. This perfect combination of art and commerce has gradually been accepted by merchants and consumers. With the quick change of economic and cultural arts, commercial illustration art undergoes a good development. Its development has brought new vitality to traditional manufacturing and made traditional manufacturing products refreshing. It expands and sublimates commercial products and illustrations by using various popular or non-popular elements. Of course, the most important thing is that it has obtained economic benefits after injecting artistic elements into the commercial field. With the gradual improvement of the living conditions and quality of ordinary people in China, the public's concept of consumption not only stops at the product itself but more care about the external design and visual effect of the product. In this case, the cultural impact brought by injecting illustration elements into the product exactly satisfies consumer's psychology. Therefore, the application of illustration in commercial product has become an indispensable trend. It can not only make the product sell better, but also give consumers a intuitive and beautiful enjoyment. The application of illustration in commercial product brings not only economic benefits, but also the organic combination of more fields, such as the integration of economy, culture, art, etc. so that art is extended to all aspects of a product in commercial form.

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II. THE EXPRESSION FORM OF ILLUSTRATION IN COMMERCE

A. *The elements to be possessed by illustration being applied in commerce*

The effect of illustrations in some commercial products is short-lived, just like a meteor which comes and goes soon but is extremely impressive. Therefore, merchants will constantly update their products, so illustration application in commercial product is value-added only in short term. In this case, it is needed to make full use of the value of illustration by creativity to show it to consumers in the most perfect art form so that consumers can resonate and be stimulated to buy. When creating illustration in commercial product, more attention should be paid to the combination of illustration content and the product, and use creative illustration to advertise the product. Illustration should meet the following three requirements when being applied in commercial product. First, it should be able to convey information and content of the product in most direct and concise way; second, its artistic expression form should meet the mass's requirement for art appreciation; third, it should be able to stimulate consumers' desire to buy the product.

Nowadays, the pace of social life is fast. Consumers do not have the energy and time to ponder the meaning of illustration shown on product at all. What they mainly concern about is the product illustrated by the illustration. So the illustration must be discoverable by consumers among a dazzling array of products, so that consumers can notice the illustration and remember the product.

Few consumers may buy a commercial product based on their artistic aesthetics. Most consumers first consider the use value when buying a product. When the illustration does not reflect the advertising role for the product, consumers will choose products that they have trusted before. Therefore, adverse effect may be obtained and the value-added effect of illustration may be lost if the illustration applied in a commercial product only pursue the artistic effect regardless of the mass consumer group's outlook of artistic value. The application of illustration in commercial product must be able to meet the aesthetic standard of the mass consumer group, namely must understand the development of the market economy and the mass's consumption ability and aesthetic standard. Only in this way can illustration show its value of application in the commercial product.

For example, in illustration creation, exaggerated expression method is often taken. Generally, it is thought that "exaggeration" is a single "deformation". This is wrong. It should be a creative demonstration to enlarge some painting content with special allegorical meanings to attract people's attention. Therefore, just like poster design needs to have creative idea, the most important thing to understand the application of illustration to commercial product is to make it able to attract consumers' attention. If an outdoor poster cannot let passersby stop and interpret it, it is difficult to reflect its value. Therefore, commercial illustration creation must have its unique creativity, so that it can attract

the eyes of consumers to understand its creative content and know about the product.

The artistic creation of illustration is not in just one style. Many styles have appeared over creation of artists in different periods. And with the application of computer technology, the creation of illustration experiences different innovation. But what are the expression forms of illustration in commerce?

B. *Hand-drawn illustration*

Illustrations have many forms. With the change of the times, China's illustration art has made new breakthroughs. The earliest traceable hand-drawn illustration in China is the trademark of Liu Jia Gongfu Needle Shop. The illustration shows a scene that a white rabbit pestles medicines by using iron pestle. Hand-drawn illustration can add what happened in life into the creator's understanding and express it in a painting way. The times are constantly developing, and hand-drawn illustrations have also developed new forms, such as adding science and technology into hand-drawn illustrations. From traditional paintbrushes to tablets and then to digital technology, those evolutions all indicate that painting is moving forward constantly. Illustration can be used for demonstrating the function and use method of a commercial product and bring different visual impact. Painting is intrinsically subjective, vivid and approachable; hand-drawn illustration even does not have too much restriction [1].

C. *Flat illustration*

Flat illustration is currently the most versatile illustration design style. They are widely used in offline flat printing and a variety of online design fields such as online APPs for major portal sites. The flat abandons all decorative 3D effects, pursues simple graphics and bright colors, and strives to create a completely flat design style. In flat illustration, a large number of irregular geometric figures are used. Many factors such as color, position, proportion and structure are taken into full use in the presentation of the picture effect. Through the complementation and adjustment between various factors, three different effects such as the far, the middle and the near are shaped. Flat illustrations are mostly used on various interfaces taking new media as the main display platform. [2]

D. *Digital illustration*

Digital illustration is produced by using digital technology product. Digital technology of digital product can make the painter's ideas vividly expressed. It is often used in the fields of movies and television, animation games and so on. At the same time, digital illustration plays a role of promotion and advertising in brand marketing [3].

III. THE APPLICATION SCOPE OF ILLUSTRATION IN COMMERCE

Compared with the dullness of word language, consumers prefer the vividness of visual language, and the role of illustration in commercial product is to vividly express a certain product. It is believed that most people

have had contact with illustrations. For example, Chinese textbook for children has illustrations. As we all know, compared with adults, children do not like pure text book; pure text reading may greatly reduce their learning interest. A book combining text and pictures can help them understand more information while reading the book. This visual language expression deepens the reading interest and greatly reduces the dullness brought by pure text. This is just one of the forms in which illustrations are applied to commercial products. In general, the application can be divided into four categories:

A. Application in publications

The publications include magazines, periodicals, newspapers and books. Illustrations are often applied to their cover design and packaging [4]. Taking the cover illustration design of *A Dream of the Red Mansions* published by Beijing Children's Publishing House ("Fig. 1") as an example, the illustrations of classic characters Jia Baoyu and Lin Daiyu in different story scenes of the novel are taken as the most important elements in the cover illustration design. The illustration effect is expressed by using Chinese traditional painting techniques combined with modern watercolor painting. The painting content takes Jia Baoyu, Lin Daiyu, Xue Baochai's love and marriage tragedy as the central storyline and tells the story of a feudal aristocratic family undergoing from prosperity to decline. The clever use of illustrations highlights the expression of the center of the story, allowing readers to understand the general story through the cover design of this book. At the same time, the expression effect of illustrations can cause most readers' desire to buy. This is the role of illustrations applied in publications.



Fig. 1. Illustration design of the cover of *A Dream of Red Mansions* published by Beijing Children's Publishing House.

B. Application in movies and television and games

Illustration is also often used in the design of rules and environmental art or interfaces in movies and television plays, games, networks and so on. The illustration in the advertising poster design of the 3D animated movie

"*Monkey King: Hero is Back*" ("Fig. 2") precisely applies the image of Sun Wukong (the protagonist in this 3D movie) transforming into "The Monkey King". The clever composition and Chinese red highlights the unruly character of "The Monkey King" and echoes the theme of the poster and the movie "Hero is Back". This image of Sun Wukong subverts the traditional painting style, dazzles the audience by the application of the red tone, and attracts the audience to become curious, continuously pay attention to the movie's release and purchase movie tickets upon the release. It is a very successful case of applying illustrations in movies and television animation poster.



Fig. 2. Illustration application in the advertising poster design of the 3D animated movie "*Monkey King: Hero is Back*".

C. Application in advertising business

Illustration is also widely used in commercial propagation, illustration packaging, commercial image design, product logo and corporate image design. Nongfu Spring's beverage tea π ("Fig. 3") is a relatively successful case of using illustrations in packaging design in China. Illustration has become one of the important expression forms of packaging and product design. Its unique artistic charm and rich expression language has attracted increasing attention from the public. As long as consumers pay attention, they will find that the application of illustrations to designing or decorating the packaged products has occupied the huge share of the consumer market. The application of illustrations in packaging gives packaging a new form of decoration and visual communication concept, brings new packaging methods and visual effects to packaging design, and adds artistic charm and cultural connotation to the product.



Fig. 3. Nongfu Spring's beverage tea π.

D. Application in mascots and animated cartoons

It is also often used in the design of animated cartoons related product images and the design of mascots. For new brand, establishing the brand status and setting the brand mascot is a powerful means in order to quickly gain a foothold in the market. Images are easier to be recognized, recalled, and loved by people than texts. This is the basic law of psychology, and so do it in advertising. Setting mascot in the same industry is conducive to highlighting the characteristics of the brand, implementing differentiated brand promotion, reflecting distinctive abstraction of the brand, attracting special attention from consumers and accelerating brand advertising. Many cartoon images are abstractions familiar to everyone. As the saying "love me love my dog" goes, people are willing to accept the generality and promote the product sales. Good mascot becomes brand logo. As the brand's influence expands and the cartoon image becomes more and more popular, this abstraction may also have great commercial value. For example, producing cartoon image related articles can not only make profits, but also further expand the effect of publicity. Successful cartoon image not only brings successful corporate brand, but also reach many new fields and forms a series of related industries.

The forms of illustrations used in the above businesses include fashion style, aesthetic style, surreal style, science fiction style, cartoon style, graffiti style, decorative style, etc. [5].

The application of illustrations in commercial products began from the early 19th century. There were two kinds of products that I first came into contact with in my life. One is a match (called a foreign fire during the Republic of China). The surface of the box of matches is a small pattern with line-drawing painting illustration of characters in novels such as Journey to the West, A Dream of Red Mansions, the Romance of the Three Kingdoms, and so on. Children at that time always liked to collect such boxes, just for obtaining the illustrations. No matter for using in life or simply for

collecting the pictures, illustration added people's demand for real application effect of matches. The other one is Pechoin. It applied illustration in the same way, and its sales were also influenced by the illustration. Imagining if the match producer didn't attach the illustrations on the surface of the box, its consumers are merely housewives or smoking consumers.

The application of illustrations to commercial products is diverse. They form different styles and bring visual enjoyment to consumers in addition to bringing economic benefits to the merchants.

IV. THE STRATEGIES FOR USING ILLUSTRATIONS IN COMMERCE

The commercial expression technique of illustration has a variety of characteristics that can show its unique artistic charm. But there will be some problems. It is necessary to study its application strategy to make full use of the role of illustration.

A. Using well-known paintings to attract people's attention

In commercial products, illustration may use well-known paintings as the creative elements, such as the oil painting "Mona Lisa" created by the Italian Renaissance painter Leonardo da Vinci, and Jimmy's "Go Left, Go Right" and other artistic works created in 1999. When different artistic elements are applied to product, it can raise consumers' cognitive resonance with the work and cause consumers to stay and have a look and finally decide to buy. Taking the "Go Left, Go Right" series of paper towel products of Hengan Group ("Soulmate" paper towels) as an example, the illustration on this product tells a classic love story on the basis of Jimmy's "Go Left, Go Right" which moves consumers and increases consumers consumption desire and purchase rate for the product.

B. Targeting the target audience and highlighting the product characteristics

In the process of product dissemination and publicity, the target consumer group is not all consumers but the consumer group targeted according to the specific attributes of the product. The value-added data produced by applying illustration in commercial product can be obtained by analyzing consumers purchase power and habits based on product investigation and analyzing the extra value brought by applying illustration in commercial product. Based on the result of analysis on the data, it is needed to purposefully transform the bottleneck of traditional industrial development, highlight the special contribution of illustrations in commercial products, change consumers' consumption concepts, and increase consumers' consumption desire and purchase rate.

C. Using hi-tech auxiliary products

With the advancement of the information age and the rapid development of high technology, the organic combination of illustration, photography and computer technology can create more development space, present a

skyrocketing development trend, and get illustration and commerce linked together by digital technology.

V. CONCLUSION

With the changes of the times and the continuous development of information technology, illustrations as one of the essential information transmission tools in people's daily life will be continuously improved and innovated. The display of illustrations in visual arts will have a huge impact on the application of commercial product packaging design. It not only deepens people's cognition and understanding of illustrations in the form of commodities, but also increases consumers' interest in art appreciation and also makes great contribution to the products' sales. In commerce, the application of illustration gets many fields closely linked together and poses huge influence on art, culture and economy in aspect of commercial product packaging and application. The multiple creation forms of illustration make art extend to every aspect of daily life, so that art is no longer just a work of art, but also has economic value of commercial products. It is firmly believed that illustrations will continue to exert its economic and cultural benefits in the application in commercial products.

Illustration is an art with strong expressive nature and is more unique when being applied to commercial products. Illustration not only possesses artistic beauty, but also has commercial beauty, and also satisfies the mass's consumption values and aesthetic consumption view. However, to gain the favor of consumers, it is necessary to find a balance between commerce and art when applying illustration in commercial product. While satisfying the artist's artistic pursuit when creating illustration, it cannot be separated from commerciality. This will be a challenge with high difficulty. For a commercial illustration creation designer, he must understand the public's consumption aesthetics and find the artistic creation opportunity for realizing a perfect combination between art and commerce. The application of illustrations in commerce brings new consumer experience and more consumer choices to consumers.

The rapid development of modern science and technology provides a broader platform for the development of illustrations. At the same time, photography and digital technology also change the traditional illustration expression forms and the commercial application fields of illustrations. Illustrators can create digital paintings and digital combination on a computer, and better express their incredible ideas through computer technology. However, compared with countries where the illustration market has been very prosperous, such as the United States and Japan, China develops rapidly although it started late in the field of digital painting. At present, the application fields of illustrations, graffiti and traditional element patterns are becoming more and more extensive, and even extend to small tableware for daily necessities. The reason why illustrations develop very rapidly is because China's economy has undergone tremendous changes in the past 40 years of reform and opening up. People's economic living

standards have been improved, and the pursuit of more refined life phenomena will enthusiastically display their personality and promote their "personalized development." They decorate themselves or their different identification symbols to show their different personality and living habit. Taking the exterior pattern design of car as an example, many young people put their favorite patterns or symbols on the exterior of their car body to show the difference of their car. Gradually, the decoration of the exterior appearance of the car bodies will become a new culture, and this culture will gradually evolve into different fields. As a result, people gradually develop the habit of appreciating illustrations. At the same time, the demand for illustrations in the field of commercial application is getting higher and higher, making the competition in illustration industry fierce.

The rapid development of computer technology and the Internet is leading the development direction of illustrations in the future. In the future, digital media art and technology will be used for applying illustrations to different commercial fields. Digital technology can be used for extracting various elements of illustration design and applying them to appropriate commercial products. Nowadays, the popularity of digital painting makes it available to create a large number of different styles of illustrations and creates wider space for development of illustrations. It is believed that illustration will change from a single flat and static carrier to three-dimensional and dynamic multi-dimensional spaces to show its artistic charm. This trend will make illustrations become a fashion trend.

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