

The Endpoint of Costume Designing—Creating New Lifestyle

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Keywords: Tool Value; Costume Designing; Lifestyle

Abstract: As a kind of material production, costume designing starts from meeting people's needs and ends with the creation of lifestyle. This paper demonstrates that costume designing ends with lifestyle creation from three aspects: the essence of costume designing, the development history of costume designing and the demand of consumers, and expounds the value of costume designing as a tool to satisfy people's lifestyle creation.

1. Introduction

Marx and Engels pointed out: "We should first determine the first premise of all human existence, that is, the first premise of all history. This premise is that people must be able to live in order to 'make history'. But in order to live, we need clothing, food, shelter and other things at first. Therefore, the first historical activity is to produce materials to satisfy these needs." As a kind of material production, costume designing starts from meeting people's needs and ends with the creation of lifestyle.

2. The essence of costume designing

Designing is a conscious activity of human beings. Specifically explaining, based on the needs of human beings and with the help of existing assistance (i.e. materials and technology), designers study both physiological, psychological characteristics of human and social structure and progress, then put forward the idea of human production and life, and finally put it into practice. As long as designers really design this way, the fruit of their design is undoubtedly an extension of the new lifestyle of human beings.[1]

Since ancient times, in order to achieve their survival and development, human beings have mainly done two things: one is to "pursue truth"; the other is to "create value". Creating and designing always begins with life experience. Then, through product manufacturing and identification of the designer's cognition or judgment, products enter into people's lives through market channels. Therefore, "products" and "commodities" are the media or carriers of life designing.

French scholar Lefebvre once said, "Focus on the joy of life". Value does not refer to everything existent but their meaning to human beings. In *Creating Breakthrough Products: Innovation from Product to Program Approval*, Jonathan Cagan & Craig M. Vogel defines value as "People's expectations of products and services which can be reflected through the impact of products on lifestyle, functional characteristics and ergonomic effects, and ultimately develop into a useful and desirable product." [3]

Lifestyle refers to a person's consumption pattern, which reflects his or her choice of how to spend time and money. Different styles of costume reflect different ways of people's life. Therefore, costume designing is essentially the creation of a certain way of life. In addition, the study of lifestyle focuses on groups rather than individuals. Every group exists around us as a clear symbol. For example, in the 1920s, a straight tennis skirt that Chanel created, built a healthy, athletic and boyish image of women, and changed the mainstream fashion style at that time. Actually, that innovation of Chanel was completely different with the social lifestyle of housewives who only focused on family at that time (fig.1). In the 1960s, the elegant image of women, represented by

Jacqueline’s dress, became popular. That image reflected a mainstream elite lifestyle (fig.2). After that, the rapid expansion of global economy has created the luxury style of the 1980s, which reflecting a large number of exaggerated decoration such as bright elements like gold and silver in clothing (fig.3). In the 1990s, there emerged the BOBOs, “BoBos are highly educated elites in the 21st century. Compared with the wandering hippies of the 1960s and the progressive yuppies of the 1980s, BOBOs take a new compromise attitude towards morality, work and life. They pay attention to the quality of life and pursue their own best life. They like exquisite things, but they don’t overvalue noble and luxurious styles.”[4]

Although a group of people with similar social background and consumption concept decides lifestyle, different consumers still have their own characteristics that make them special. In addition, lifestyle is not unchanged, it changes as people’s values and demographic characteristics change. For example, in the 1980s, Chinese people found it hard to accept plaid shirts and button-tightened trumpet jeans, but now weird dresses are considered to embody personality and fashion, and jeans become the symbol of sexy and fashion. In 2015, the main topic of Cross-Strait Wearable Technology and Design Seminar was about healthy life, focusing on telemedicine, diet detection, intelligent environment, big data, health care and sleep technology, etc. The theme of this conference is “happier lifestyle”, which is enough to show that it’s all about creating a lifestyle no matter which technology means is applied in which field.



Fig.1 Fashionable Female Image of Chanel



Fig.2 Elegant Female Image of Jacqueline



Fig.3 Luxury Image in the 1980s

3. The development history of costume designing

Historically, people’s views and opinions on sports, health, time, gender, fashion and other things are always changing. Actually, it is based on people’s change of consumption demand. According to the famous “Consumer Psychological Description Method”, two variables like consumer personality and lifestyle are combined to study how exactly people spend time, their views, interests and preferences. Consumers’ personality and lifestyle are reflected through their activities and interests. Specifically, consumer activities include: work, hobbies, shopping, entertainment, beauty, fitness, vacation and so on. Consumer interests include clothing, home decoration, fashion, media, music, food, leisure and so on. Consumer opinions refer to people’s views on themselves and society, politics, economy, culture, education, commerce, products and future. On the other hand, the lifestyle of consumer includes different aspects. The first one is their choice on costume, like dress, medical style, fabrics, colors, patterns, dress matching concept, brand preference, cosmetics purchase place preference, purchase time. The second one is their choice on home furnishing decoration including decoration style, purchasing place. The third one is their choice on fashion, which includes their fashion sensibility. The last one is their choice on media, which includes their accessibility to TV and radio, magazines and newspapers, Internet, sports and transportation, and so on.

There is another way to segment consumers. According to “Consumer Psychographics

Segmentation System” which is a famous VALS (value and lifestyle) systems developed by SRI Consulting Company in 1978, Psychographic segmentation approaches slice up the market into eight groups: 1) Innovators: prefer exquisite things, accept new products, new technologies, be suspicious of advertising, read publications extensively, and rarely watch TV; 2) Experiencers: follow the fashion trend, impulse buying, pay attention to advertising, like rock and roll music; 3) Thinkers: have little interest in image and prestige, use household goods more than average, and enjoy participating in educational and public activities; 4) Achievers: be attracted toward high products, targeted by many companies; 5) Believers: like cheap goods, their habits change slowly; 6) Strivers: pay attention to personal image and have limited disposable income, they spend money mainly for clothing and personal care products; 7) Makers: pay more attention to the comfort, durability, value of products, not easily affected by luxury goods, and buy basic necessities of life; 8) Survivors: be loyal to the brand, believe in advertising, use discount coupons and pay attention to discount goods. The targeting of different consuming groups is according to their different lifestyles. Consumers express their own lifestyle choices through different clothing and accessories. (fig.4)



Fig.4 Different dress styles embody different lifestyles

4. The Demand of Costume Consumers

When a successful company develops a new product, it often spends a lot of time doing market research, understanding consumers of different lifestyles, and then identifying the target market for the new product. The famous jeans manufacturer, Levis Company of America, is the earliest one to use canvas as raw material to produce clothing. Its early customers were usually engaged in gold panning. Hence, this wear-resistant and rugged material were widely used in Western jeans and mining production. Nowadays, Levis jeans have developed into a fashion icon. From 1950 to 1970, the number of young people rapidly increased since war, which brought a broad market prospect for Levis Company. At that time, Levis Company did not effectively subdivide the market or analyze the internal situation of sales growth. By the early 1980s, a group of young consumers had grown older, and their lifestyle and demographic characteristics had changed to a certain extent. At this time, their demand for jeans and their purchasing power were both reduced, and the wear resistance of jeans extended the life of jeans. As a result, the proportion of young people who bought jeans in the market has decreased. Finally, the sales of Levis Company sharply decreased. In this case, Levis Company realized that it was important to analyze the motivation, pursuit and behavior of consumers, especially those consumers from every different segmentation. Accordingly, according to the characteristics of market segmentation, Levis Company developed different styles of products that were suitable for the market consumer groups. For those born during the “baby boom” period and because of their changes in body shape, lifestyle and consumption level, they purchased less and less products. To awaken these traditional loyal customers, Levis Company launched a new product, Dockers, which was comfortable and met the needs of this type of consumers. Since then, the company no longer used “501” tight jeans as a consumer target product for this group of people. By the 1980s, the “Dockers” leisure series had led the trend, with annual market sales reaching 1

billion dollars. Then, the company launched Yoga Capri garments for 50-year-olds, known as Yoga Class, such as carbon-gray sportswear made of cotton or spandex, large black waistcoat with round collar, etc.

From the successful clothing brands in China, the investigation on consumer motivation of “Septwolves” leisure men’s wear is also very accurate. At the beginning, the brand was founded with people aged 30 to 45 as the core consumer group. However, as the age of Septwolves consumer group gradually getting older, coupled with competition in the same industry, the young consumers of the brand were lost. At that time, changing the product form and changing the age composition of consumer group became the first problem that policymakers needed to solve. Through investigation and analysis of consumer groups, the consumption potential of young people has attracted the attention of decision-makers. Septwolves made some strategies to handle with it, such as invited more than 200 college students to collect their works through “the 12th Golden Calf Awards for Advertising”. Septwolves took this opportunity to understand how young people perceive their brand. This laid the foundation for Septwolves to occupy young people’s share of consumption in the future. In addition, the Septwolves-Jeans series launched by Septwolves successfully won the favor of young people aged 23-26.

Through the above cases, we can see that if a successful brand can accurately grasp the motivation of consumers and provide targeted service, it can avoid the data bias caused by relying solely on market statistics to locate the style. Besides, it can enable the company to establish a unique market brand style. Specifically, the change of product design style and design method closely revolves around the change of consumption demand. In addition, the value of costume product design is reflected in the consumer’s consumption process.

5. Conclusion

The value of design lies in its standardization. It has two main functions: creating life and benefiting human beings. The former is for guiding designing behavior, and the latter is for applying design products into life. These two functions are the logical starting point for the establishment of the design value system, and other norms and functions are derived from this two basic points. We say that philosophy is devoted to helping people acquire more perfect knowledge and self-knowledge at the level of epistemology and axiology, make wise positioning and choice for life practice and self-development, understand the world and life as a whole, and bridge the gap between self and the world. Under the trend of aesthetic generalization, the philosophy and aesthetic of life art integrate into life by guiding aesthetics and artistic creation. [5] For example, it provides guidance for the consumption, fitness, self-packaging, daily recreation, artistic pursuit and other life processes of “homo aestheticus”, shape their healthy lifestyle, enhance self-confidence and finally create a perfect individual life.

In our life, products are no longer made just based on technical standards, functional requirements or commercial needs, but all together create our daily living environment which is full of contemporary spirit. [6] Fashion style has become the most powerful psychological factor between fashion enterprises and designers and consumers. Consumers’ recognition and love for costume often comes from the resonance of the style expressed by the costume.[7] Fundamentally speaking, the value of designing lies in creating people’s daily life and promoting the development of human society. Therefore, only starting real-life practice and the effect of costume on people’s life, can we truly grasp the essence of designing value.

Acknowledgement

*This paper was sponsored by the research project of humanities and social science in education department of Hubei, (Project No. 18Y080) and Wuhan Textile and Apparel Digital Engineering Technology Research Center.

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