

How can ontology and epistemology provide philosophical theoretical support for the research on the relationship between the identity of Chinese Generation Z youth and the visual aesthetics of bubble tea brand design

1 Introduction

The rapid structural transformation of Chinese society and the proliferation of uncertainties and risks have triggered unease. China's Generation Z is at an important stage of self-awareness, desperately seeking social status and social respect, and is in the midst of an identity crisis. In addition, with the implementation of the family planning strategy many years ago and the arrival of the 'one-child' era, in which almost all Generation Z are only children, 'loneliness' is a true reflection of this generation. They are particularly keen to define themselves, express their identities, establish their social networks as soon as possible, and seek a sense of collective belonging in order to gain a sense of self-worth. Bubble tea consumption, as the most direct and convenient social behaviour reflecting identity, showing preferences and responding to trends, has undoubtedly become an important means for Generation Z to seek self-identity and collective identity. Generation Z consumer groups are becoming increasingly influential in various beverage markets including the pearl milk tea industry (Wang, B. and Jiang, X., 2021). Bubble tea is popular among today's youth. For this generation, indulging in the pleasant experience of pearl milk tea brings moments of happiness and fulfilment (Zhang, X., 2023).

This research mainly includes two major disciplines, namely identity and brand design. Identity belongs to sociology, while brand design belongs to art. How to combine these two disciplines and complement each other will be discussed from the perspectives of ontology and epistemology. The question and goal of this study is to analyze how the design of bubble tea brand conforms to the performance identity of Chinese Generation Z through visual elements, explore the relationship between bubble tea brand and the impression and identity management of Chinese Generation Z under the current cultural environment, and then react to the future trend of bubble tea design.

2. Research objectives and philosophical basis

2-1 Definition of ontology

Ontology is a multifaceted concept that has been developed in various disciplines, especially in philosophy and information science. In philosophy, ontology is primarily concerned with the study of existence, including the nature of existence, the classification of entities, and the relationships between them. It addresses fundamental questions such as what does it mean for things to exist, and how to understand different modes of existence (Huang,M.,2010).

2-2 Ontology in the field of brand design

To explore the essence, form, meaning and dynamic development of brand existence. Brand design is not only the construction of visual elements, but also the multidimensional expression of the brand as a kind of "existence". This requires a clear ontological position of the brand to better guide design practice and strategy construction. What is a brand? A brand is a tangible entity, which considers the brand to be a material existence, such as the product itself, logo, packaging design, etc. (Wigley, Stephen M,2013). But most of the time, the brand is not a tangible entity, the brand is a symbol construction, the existence of the brand is more reflected in the meaning, emotion and value in the hearts of consumers. Brands are not just practical things, they evoke emotional experiences (Grappi Silvia,2021). Iconic brands such as Apple and Coca-Cola are recognized not only for their products, but also for the meaning they convey to consumers (Batra Rajeev,2022). A brand is not only a product or service, but also a social construct. It embodies the cultural symbols formed by social interaction and collective identity. The relationship between consumers and brands is deeply influenced by cultural values and social background (Man Lok Lam, Wing Sun Liu and Chester Kin Man To, 2011). Brand is also a Relational Entity, which exists through the interaction with consumers and is a dynamic relationship. Brands are increasingly recognized as partners in building relationships with consumers, similar to interpersonal relationships (Binti Abd, N.H. and Wahab Tuhin, M.K. ,2016).

In the field of branding, ontology deals with the essence and identity of a brand, influencing how consumers construct and perceive a brand. The brand study of Rio de Janeiro (2019) illustrates how a city as a brand expresses its identity through discourse semiotics, emphasizing the interplay between nature and culture. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning that underpins brand identity, which is essential for effective brand design.

2-3 The application of Constructivism in brand design

Ontological reflection helps me to clarify the nature of my research object. First of all, it must be clear whether reality exists objectively independent of human consciousness, or is it formed through human experience and social construction?

Constructivism believes that reality is jointly constructed by human beings, and the essence of social phenomena depends on language, culture and social background (Zepf, S., Hartmann, S. and Zepf, F., 2007). The essence of brand has been discussed above. As a visual and material existence, brand exists in logo, packaging design, brand environment, etc. (Buryk, D. and Holubets, I., 2024) Brand design is not only the construction of visual elements, but also the multidimensional expression of brand as a kind of "existence", which not only exists as a visual element entity. It is also a cultural symbol and emotional symbol in the minds of consumers, as well as an interactive relationship with consumers. The position of this study is biased towards constructivism. Brand is the result of the joint construction of consumers, designers and society (Kennedy, E. and Guzman, F., 2016). Brand design needs to reflect the cultural background of consumers (He, J. and Wang, C.L., 2017), social values and emotional connection (Da Costa, M.P.M.B., 2023). Brand designers should pay attention not only to the symbolic design of the brand, such as logo, color, font, etc., but also to the narrative construction of the brand story (Zaichkowsky, J.L., 2010). The existence form of visual elements in brand visual design conveys the essence of the brand, and the brand logo symbolizes the core value of the brand (Trehan, S. and Kalro, A.D., 2024). Color and font shape the emotional tone and cultural cognition of the brand (Salgado-Montejo, A. et al., 2014). For example, Nike's "tick" is not only A visual symbol, but also represents a cultural symbol of sportsmanship and goal drive (Jankovic, M. and Jaksic-Stojanovic, A., 2019).

Brand visual design (such as logo, color, packaging) is not only a marketing tool, but also has social and cultural significance, and is a symbolic carrier of consumer identity expression. The visual design of bubble tea is the construction of cultural symbols. Through the combination of visual design and cultural elements (such as retro style, simple style, national tide), bubble tea brands convey specific values and identity symbols. As a sign of social recognition, Gen Z consumers seek a sense of belonging and identity through brand symbols when they share brand experiences (such as photos of bubble tea) with the community. Two-way construction of brands and consumers. First, the visual design of bubble tea brands provides consumers with symbols of identity, but the meaning of these symbols is re-endowed and interpreted by Generation Z consumers in a specific cultural context. Second, social and cultural influences: Both brands and consumers are influenced by broader socio-cultural forces (e.g., pop culture, subculture, social media trends) that collectively shape the meaning and identity of the brand.

Moreover, the exploration of branding paradigms suggests that the shift in branding methodology is influenced by broader economic and social changes. The study shows that a critical and comprehensive approach to branding requires the interplay of various approaches and methodologies, which can be understood through epistemological insight. This interaction can lead to a more adaptive and relatable understanding of the brand, ultimately influencing brand design strategies. In

conclusion, the application of epistemology in brand design is reflected in the need for a deeper understanding of the brand experience (Mazurek, Marica and Kybernetes, 2014).

2-4 Reflection on ontological philosophy

How does a brand relate to a consumer's identity? Does the brand design respect the cultural background and emotional needs of consumers?

Brand visual design (such as logo, color, packaging) is not only a marketing tool, but also has social and cultural significance, and is a symbolic carrier of consumer identity expression. Brand visual design is the construction of cultural symbols. bubble tea brands combine visual design with cultural elements (such as retro style, simple style, national tide) to convey specific values and identity symbols. It is also a sign of social recognition. When Generation Z consumers share the consumption experience of bubble tea brands, such as taking photos with bubble tea, they seek a sense of belonging and identity through brand symbols and community dialogue. The visual design of bubble tea brands provides consumers with a symbol of identity. Young people tend not to simply focus on the functionality and practicality of products when consuming, but tend to look for brands that meet their own self-cognition and social identity needs. The design, formula and publicity of bubble tea brand convey specific information through symbolic means, such as the "character" and "existence significance" of the brand through color, logo, packaging style and other elements. When young people buy bubble tea, they are often not only to meet their physiological needs, but also to convey their personal values and identity in society through consumption behavior. Both brands and consumers are influenced by broader socio-cultural forces (e.g., pop culture, subcultures, social media trends) that work together to shape a brand's meaning and identity.

2-5 The definition of Epistemology

Epistemology plays a crucial role in shaping your research perspective by influencing the way knowledge is constructed, understood and verified within your chosen field. Highlighting your ontological and epistemological positions is crucial, as this establishes the underlying assumptions that guide your research methods and methodology. Especially in qualitative contexts, knowledge is often socially constructed through personal experience (Mukhles M. and Al-Ababneh, 2020) .

2-6 The application of epistemology in brand design

The application of epistemology to brand design can be understood through a variety of studies that explore the intersection of knowledge, experience, and brand strategy. An important aspect is the emphasis on the conceptual framework around the brand experience. Zhongqi, J. et al. (2020)'s study highlighted the need to redefine the brand

experience, showing that a deeper understanding of what constitutes the experience a brand provides is essential for future brand research and practice, suggesting that epistemological considerations can guide the development of brand design by focusing on the underlying knowledge structure of the consumer experience.

2-7 Application of interpretivism in brand design of bubble tea

The idea that knowledge is constructed through the interaction between researcher and object, and is influenced by researcher understanding, is closely aligned with the principles of interpretivism. This philosophical position emphasizes the subjectivity of knowledge and the importance of context in understanding human behavior and social phenomena. There is a fundamental difference between interpretivism and positivism, which values objectivity and the testing of hypotheses. In contrast, interpretivism recognizes that knowledge is shaped dynamically by the researcher's perspective and the relationship between the researcher and the object of study. This is evident in discussions of educational research, where the authors criticise the strict separation between the natural and social sciences, arguing that social researchers can gain important insights that contradict strict interpretivist claims (Matta and Corrado, 2015).

The application of Interpretivism in brand design is mainly reflected in how brands construct meaning through symbols and narratives, and establish deep interaction with consumers' subjective experience, cultural background and social context. Interpretivism emphasizes the understanding and interpretation of individual subjective experience and social and cultural construction of a brand. It is an important philosophical stance in brand design that focuses on people and pays attention to emotion and cultural resonance. It suggests that brand design should take into account the diverse and dynamic ways in which consumers, especially young people, interact with brand symbols in their daily lives. Interpretivism in brand design emphasizes the need to consider the consumer's perspective and the meaning they derive from the brand. By integrating insights from consumer culture theory, brand authenticity, and experiential branding, designers can create a more effective and resonant brand identity that aligns with the subjective experience of their target audience. (NAIRN, A., GRIFFIN, C. and PATRICIA, G.W., 2008).

2-8 The challenge of interpretivism in brand design

How to maintain the consistency of the brand's core symbols while meeting the needs of consumers in different cultures? Brand identity and image should be aligned, especially in the service sector, emphasizing the need for clear brand identity to avoid inconsistency with consumers' views. This highlights that interpretivism, which combines brand identity with consumers' life experience, challenges the uncertainty of

consumer interpretation, which may be biased or conflicting in the interpretation of brand symbols by different consumers, and brand design needs to deal with this uncertainty (Zwakala, K.M. and Steenkamp, P.,2023). Consumers' reconstruction of brand meaning may be beyond the control of the brand, resulting in brand image deviation from the original positioning. For example, Lombard, A. (2007) showed that the perceived brand image formed by consumers' psychological perception may be quite different from the expected brand image. This discrepancy occurs when consumers interpret brand attributes at odds with the company's marketing intent, resulting in a brand image that does not match its original positioning. This problem may be a challenge for the future.

3 Literature review

3-1 The personal identity of Generation Z in China -- performative identity

In Goffman's view, People's Daily life is like a performance, in which individuals express themselves in a predetermined, planned way of behavior, and then control the impression of others, or obtain from them the affirmation and response they desire. In the past, people's "stage performances" were mostly presented directly in the form of face to face (Levine, S., 2014). Nowadays, with the rapid development of social platforms, the field of self-presentation has extended to the digital space and is becoming more ritualized. "Performing identity" refers to an individual's ability to display a specific self-image in public in order to meet the expectations of others or the needs of social norms. This concept is derived from the "self-performance theory" developed by sociologist Erving Goffman (Levine, S., 2014). In the context of the prevalence of social media, Gen Z is increasingly inclined to "act out" their lifestyle, personality and values to gain recognition and likes from others. In this study, the introduction of "performing identity" can deeply reveal how Generation Z displays their identity through visual aesthetics in the process of consumption, thus influencing their brand choice and preference (Wei, L. and Nuan,W.,2022).

Nowadays, in order to cater to Generation Z's pursuit of various "happiness", "ritual" and "exquisite life" in daily life, bubble tea operators have decorated the whole process of bubble tea consumption as "ritual performances". Some scholars have pointed out that ritual activities are composed of four key parts, which are ritual objects, ritual scripts, ritual performance roles and ritual audiences. Corresponding to the consumption of bubble tea, the ritual objects are bubble tea and fruit tea, Generation Z can freely choose the tea base (such as black tea, green tea), with small ingredients (such as pearls, herbs), added sugar (such as half sugar, 0 calorie sugar), check the temperature (such as less ice, warm, hot), and the tea drink with its own collocation is given symbolic significance, is the product of personality and taste. The role of the ritual performance is Generation Z who buy bubble tea, and they realize the ritualized self-presentation through the whole chain of "consumption,

shooting and social media punch"; The audience of the ceremony is everyone who watches bubble tea consumption on various social platforms, including Generation Z themselves. In the consumption process of bubble tea ceremony, Generation Z not only realizes the private customization of bubble tea taste, but also realizes the private customization of performance content(Wei, L. and Nuan,W.,2022).

3-2 group identity

French scholar Michel Maffeau uses the term "new tribe" to describe micro-groups gathered by common interests, similar tastes, and similar emotional feelings. These micro-groups have the characteristics of mobility and accidental gathering and dispersion. In his view, this emotional tribe "is less rigid than the organizational forms we are familiar with, it refers more to A specific atmosphere, a state of mind, and is best expressed through lifestyle" (Hardy, A., Gretzel, U. and Hanson, D. 2013). In the past, this "new tribe" mostly appeared in sports rallies, department stores or shopping centers, and now, novel commodity categories emerge in an endless stream, and there are a lot of iterative and upgraded fast-moving consumer products, and people's consumption patterns and consumption choices are deeply shaped by the capital's use of social media to hype up their products.

Research shows that 57% of the generation Z group said that "others have their own, do not want to be isolated by peers" (Wei, L. and Nuan,W.,2022), which triggered the group to keep up with the trend in the circle, maintain the common language of consumption behavior. For Generation Z, who are lonely and eager to belong in the "one-child era", bubble tea consumption gives them the "access card" to enter the "bubble tea tribe".

In life, bubble tea has become a must-have drink in social scenes such as shopping, party dating, learning and discussion for Generation Z, and is a veritable "social currency". Wei, L. and Nuan,W. (2022) conducted a study on the question "Why do you choose to drink bubble tea" and found that more than 60% of the surveyed generation Z consume bubble tea only because they "want to drink" and "drink well", but there are also some people because "everyone has bought it, so let me buy a cup". I also try to drink good "and choose to buy bubble tea. Generation Z seeks connection and belonging in bubble tea consumption to get rid of isolation and exclusion (Wei, L. and Nuan,W.,2022).

3-3 Social identity

bubble tea brands, through their visual symbols and cultural connotations, help Gen Z gain recognition in specific social situations. For example, some brands may communicate social values such as environmental protection, health and nature through visual design, and these symbols can help Gen Z to show their identification

with these values in their social circle, thus showing their role as "socially responsible" or "environmentalist"(Wei, L. and Nuan,W.,2022).

3-4 The relationship between bubble tea consumer identity and visual aesthetic

In addition, in the tea drinking industry with global chains, unified formulas and similar products, when tastes are increasingly similar and cannot attract more consumption, only by learning to "make differences" can we retain the consumption of Generation Z. Therefore, some operators have launched the design of "limited cup body" to improve the appearance level of the product, and some operators have injected cultural and creative ideas and new images for bubble tea through cross-border joint branding and manufacturing topics, such as some bubble tea brands and museums to develop innovative products and give humanistic ideas. As Baudrillard said, "the worship of difference is based on the loss of difference" (Alian, S. and Wood, S., 2021). The elements of "novelty, uniqueness, collection" contained in specific products accurately target the generation Z seeking novelty and stimulate their curiosity. The consumer behavior that causes them to buy again and again.

Compared with high-end big-name products, niche brands and affordable products update faster and capture attention better, directly hitting consumers' daily social touch points; At the same time, compared with the value given by a tens of thousands of yuan luxury item, the physical and mental experience and group identity brought by the irregular consumption of tens of yuan seem to give them more satisfaction. It can be seen that the big hand of symbol consumption has shifted from celebrities to the daily life of ordinary people. bubble tea, as an affordable drink that stimulates taste buds and delights oneself in daily life, has also become a popular consumption code among young people, influencing the lifestyle of Generation Z under the induction of capital and media(Wei, L. and Nuan,W.,2022).

The consumer and the brand interact, because the consumer owns a certain symbol, participate in the coding process and obtain the status identity that it represents. In the pursuit of differentiation codes, people increasingly favor niche fashion brands and affordable goods with novel designs and novel concepts, and pay more attention to the unique values shaped by slogans, logos, color matching ingredients, consumption scenes, and social contacts. Therefore, manufacturers use social media to promote, celebrities and other key opinions recommended. Communication implants "labels" such as fashion trends, health and environmental protection, and emotional experience into products, gradually weakening the functional features of products to meet the needs of the public, and turning to the realization of consumers' emotional demands, such as adjusting their mood, treating themselves, relieving pressure, establishing connections, taking photos and uploading them to social media(Wei, L. and Nuan,W.,2022).

3-4 The relationship between visual aesthetics of bubble tea brand and identity

The bubble tea brand helps Generation Z construct and express "character identity" in their daily consumption through visual design. Specifically: the visual elements of bubble tea brands (such as packaging, store design, advertising, etc.) often have a distinct personality, allowing Gen Z to play different "roles" in different social situations. For example, the packaging of a brand of bubble tea may be cute and appropriate to express the role of a young woman at a party of friends; The other brand's packaging may be more modern and simple, stylish and powerful, and more suitable for expressing the mature and independent role of Generation Z in work or social situations. The visual aesthetic of a brand not only helps consumers identify the brand, but also enables Generation Z to "project" the social role they want to show when choosing a particular brand. For example, choosing a delicate bubble tea packaging may make consumers feel their role as "tastemakers" at the party; Choosing a bubble tea brand with a cute cartoon image may let them show a "lively and interesting" role among friends. This visual projection provides Gen Z with the opportunity to shape their role through their consumer behavior.

bubble tea brand design should pay attention to the identity of Generation Z consumers, and design a symbol system that can support consumers to express themselves and their social roles. For example, Supreme has attracted young consumers through street culture symbols and has become a symbol of subcultural identity(de Macedo, M.L. ,2015). Creating brand designs that adapt to diverse identities and allow consumers to participate in the reconstruction of brand meaning. Strengthen brand stories and consumer connections through visual content; Align brands with consumers' social values and identities. The presence of the brand is not only reflected in the material level, but also reflected in the consumer experience, and the brand store can also communicate the brand value through visual and atmospheric design. Brand design should focus on the subjective experience of consumers and respect their cultural background and emotional needs.

4 Case study

4-1 Harley-Davidson motorcycle brand research

A study of the Harley-Davidson motorcycle brand uses interpretive phenomenology to reveal several key themes related to its marketing strategy, consumer identity, and cultural meaning. The brand is currently facing challenges as it tries to appeal to a younger, urban demographic. The new leadership is focusing on establishing physical stores in major Canadian cities, aiming to create Spaces that are more like community centres than traditional sales centres, thereby addressing specific market challenges outside of seasonal riding restrictions (Lloyd, J. ,2017) Harley Owners Group has

created a strong brand community through collective events such as biking parties and cultural festivals. This community culture provides owners with a shared sense of identity: the ride reinforces the user's "Harley" identity. In community activities, owners further construct individual and group identities through Harley products and related activities (such as modifying motorcycles). The custom design of Harley motorcycles (such as accessories, colors, styling) provides consumers with the opportunity to express their individuality. By modifying motorcycles to incorporate their own unique aesthetic and cultural preferences, consumers transformed Harley into a vehicle for identity expression. Brand symbols such as the Harley logo, leather clothing and embroidery became an extension of consumers' personal style. The owners of Harley satisfy their self-realization in the process of consumption: expressing personal value and pursuing freedom through riding; Social needs: Join the brand community to gain a sense of belonging and identity; Emotional connection: deep resonance with brand culture, forming an emotional dependence on the brand.

4-2 The impact of case studies on this study

The case of Harley motorcycle has brought enlightenment to Chinese bubble tea brands if they meet the identity of Generation Z consumers. The bubble tea brand helps Generation Z construct and express "character identity" in their daily consumption through visual design. Specifically, first of all, the visual elements of the bubble tea brand (such as packaging design, store design, advertising, etc.) often have a distinct personality, allowing Gen Z to play different "roles" in different social occasions. For example, the packaging of a bubble tea brand may be full of girly, cute style, suitable to express the role of young women in friends' parties; The other brand's packaging may be more modern and simple, stylish and powerful, and more suitable for expressing the mature and independent role of Generation Z in work or social situations.

bubble tea brands, through their visual symbols and cultural connotations, help Gen Z gain recognition in specific social situations. For example, some brands may communicate social values such as environmental protection, health and nature through visual design, and these symbols can help Gen Z to show their identification with these values in their social circle, thus showing their role as "socially responsible" or "environmentalist".

A brand's visual aesthetic not only helps consumers identify the brand, but also allows Gen Z to "project" the social role they want to portray when choosing a particular brand. For example, choosing a delicate bubble tea packaging may make consumers feel their role as "tastemakers" at the party; Choosing a bubble tea brand with a cute cartoon image may let them show a "lively and interesting" role among friends. This visual projection provides Gen Z with the opportunity to shape their role through their consumer behavior.

5 ethical consideration and risks

Interpretative phenomenology emphasizes the subjective experience and meaning construction of participants, and requires special attention to the following moral hazards to ensure that the research process respects the rights of participants and research ethics (Drinkwater, K., Dagnall, N. and Bate, L., 2013).

5-1 Privacy and data protection

Interpretive phenomenology often relies on in-depth interviews, observations, and textual analysis, focusing on understanding an individual's lived experience, capturing the importance of the participant's subjective experience through semi-structured interviews (CUDJOE, E., 2022), which may involve the participant's personal information and private perspectives. Participants may reveal privacy when sharing brand aesthetics or spending habits, especially when discussing emotions, values, or cultural backgrounds. When using text analysis, researchers can enhance the richness of the collected data when analyzing written narratives or diaries, allowing for a more detailed understanding of participants' experiences (CUDJOE, E., 2022), but it may also reveal privacy.

5-2 Measurements

1. Obtain informed consent: Ensure that participants clearly understand the purpose of the study, data use and confidentiality measures, and sign consent forms.
2. Anonymization: Participants and data are strictly anonymized to prevent identity leakage.
3. Data encryption and storage: Use a secure way to store and transfer data, limiting access rights.

6 Integration and discussion

6-1 A comparison of different ontological positions in brand design

Ontology	Brand design perspective	Design strategy
Realism	A brand is an independent entity with fixed characteristics and functions	Highlight the brand's core values and visual consistency, focusing on quality and stability
Constructivism	Brands are constructed through cultural, linguistic and social interactions	Emphasis on brand story, symbol system and culturally adaptable design
Dynamic existence view	A brand is a dynamic existence that changes over time and environment	The design is flexible and scalable to adapt to different market and cultural needs

Conclusion and discussion

Through the above analysis, the essence of the research object is constructed by society, and knowledge is obtained through interpretation and understanding. The research method may be biased towards qualitative research, such as narrative analysis or phenomenological research. The research combines constructivism and interpretivism. Through the analysis, I have clarified the ontological hypothesis of my research question. The significance of brand visual design for my research object is not fixed, but varies from person to person and is influenced by the cultural and social background of Generation Z. The identity of Generation Z is closely related to its digital and global context, and brand visual symbols need to be interpreted in the context. From my epistemological standpoint, the way to acquire knowledge is to construct meaning together with research objects and understand participants' subjective experience of phenomena through interviews.

From the perspective of epistemology, this paper establishes the philosophical stand of constructivism and interpretivism. From the perspective of constructivism, the identity of Generation Z is not a fixed objective fact, but is gradually constructed through their social experience, cultural consumption and self-expression, and their identity reflects both individual needs and collective culture. From the perspective of interpretationism, how Gen Z interprets the visual design of bubble tea brands is closely related to their identity. Each Gen Z consumer has a subjective understanding

of brand symbols based on their personal background, values and social context. The design symbol of bubble tea brand is the social construction of knowledge, and its design logic comes from the market insight and the coding of cultural context. Through symbols, color, packaging and narrative, the brand seeks to construct a consumer meaning among Generation Z. Different visual elements (such as fonts, colors, graphics) have different meanings in different cultural contexts. For example, simple design may symbolize "high sense" in first-tier cities, while it may be interpreted as "simple or blank" in third-tier cities.

From an ontological perspective, the identity of Generation Z is fluid and dynamic. There is flexibility in the identity that individuals present in different Settings (e.g., campus, social media, workplace). The visual symbol of bubble tea brand has become an important medium for them to express their identity. For example, choosing a brand may symbolize "trend," but it may also symbolize "environmental protection" or "independent thinking." This shows that identity obtains concrete existence through symbols. The visual design of bubble tea brand is not only a functional packaging, but also a part of the cultural symbol system. Design elements (such as Logo, color, illustration) have dual properties in themselves: they are both the material existence of the brand, but also the carrier of culture and emotion.

Bubble tea brands interact with Generation Z. bubble tea brands convey specific values and lifestyles through visual design, thus shaping the identity of Generation Z. Gen Z is not a passive recipient, but an active constructor of brand meaning. They give the brand new cultural meaning by using, sharing, commenting and other behaviors. For example, a cup of bubble tea may be given the attributes of "social currency" and become a symbol to demonstrate the quality of one's life. Brand design attempts to meet the universal needs of consumers through symbols (such as health, beauty, environmental protection), but the identity of Generation Z often pursues personalization, resulting in the need for brands to find a balance between a unified visual language and diverse consumer interpretation. In Gen Z, some people tend to embrace the minimalist design language of globalization (e.g., minimalism, Morandi colors), while others favor the traditional symbols of localization (e.g., Chinese-style illustrations). Brand design needs to be dynamically adapted between globalization and localization.

Researchers need to recognize that Generation Z's aesthetic interpretation of brand visual design is highly subjective, so the research should not rely on a single objective data analysis, but should adopt qualitative research methods (such as in-depth interviews, participatory observation) to understand the diversified experience of consumers. The identity of Generation Z and the visual aesthetic of bubble tea brand are nested in the specific cultural context. Research needs to focus on how symbols in specific cultures are constructed and interpreted, rather than treating aesthetic preferences as universal laws.

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