

Phenomenology is applied to explain the influence of visual aesthetics in milk tea brand design on the behavior and habits of young customers

Introduction

After the 20th century, the milk tea industry developed rapidly in China and gradually became a new social culture and leisure activity favored by young people (Shi, W., Yang, C. and Yu, P., 2021). Like people in the western world who love coffee, Chinese young people are more willing to drink milk tea, and often ask their friends to go for a cup of milk tea.

Whether it is brand LOGO design, packaging design or atmosphere creation, companies are focused on affecting the aesthetic experience of consumers. Aesthetics is a fully engaged process in which vision is the most commonly used and relied upon sense by humans, and visual experience dominates all sensory experiences and deeply influences human cognition and behavior. For example, aesthetic products or packaging can activate the reward circuit of the consumer's brain, which can effectively stimulate feelings of pleasure; Beautiful visual design can also provide consumers with psychological benefits, such as affirming consumers' self-awareness, thereby promoting consumers' purchase behavior, and enhancing the brand's market table (Yun, H. et al., 2022).

Milk tea brands are no exception. As a popular tea drink among young people, milk tea is highly respected, and "milk tea economy" is constantly releasing its potential. In order to enhance market competitiveness, major milk tea brands focus on building brand culture, and the elements and content of packaging design are the visual expression of consumers' brand impression and an important visual symbol to convey brand culture. It can be seen that packaging design will have a very important impact on the market cognition of milk tea brands (Siyu, Z. and Qian, C., 2023).

This paper mainly aims to investigate how does the visual aesthetics in the design of milk tea brand affect the consumption behaviors and habits of young customers. This research will use phenomenology to explain the question.

Literature review

Brenda Ling Jin Wen and Ng Boon Aun's study stated that brand image is one of the factors affecting customers' purchasing intention. According to Istijanto et al. (2021), brand design and packaging design play an important role in the purchasing behavior of young consumers. Nowadays, the homogenization of products in the market is becoming more and more serious (Reimann, M. et al., 2010). In markets where the basic needs of consumers have been met, designing and selling aesthetic products is becoming increasingly important (Martin Reimann et al., 2010). For example, now all kinds of brands of milk tea are emerging in an endless way, consumers want to buy milk tea in China easily, all kinds of tastes of milk tea at various prices, then the unique visual design of milk tea packaging has become a gimmick to attract customers, they will set up limited edition paper cups and bags for the festival to promote consumer purchase. Enterprises will gradually enlarge the aesthetic characteristics of products (Brunner, Emery and Hall, 2009). Product design and aesthetics become a way for consumers to

differentiate between products of the same type(Zolli, 2004). No matter what kind of product is sold, aesthetic design is likely to trigger a positive response from consumers who want to own the product (Norman, 2004) and increasingly want to share it with those around them (Bloch, 1995). Many friends around me buy milk tea brands not only to drink milk tea to buy a certain brand, but to collect bags, to take photos and upload them to social media, which is a very interesting phenomenon.

Many brands put consumers in the first place in their visual design and try their best to cater to consumers' preferences. However, some enterprises focus on innovative design. In order to explore potential consumers, the trend of brand design nowadays is no longer confined to static design, and many start to devote themselves to dynamic design, new media operation and information dissemination using new technologies. Explore potential consumer groups (Yue T., 2010). Some milk tea brands are committed to combining with regional culture to create milk tea brands with Chinese characteristics, such as the Chinese style brand design that has risen in recent years, adding Chinese unique patterns on the packaging, and making the vision extremely gorgeous, many brands show different styles of visual design, the original visual design of milk tea brands can be so beautiful.

Although there is a direct relationship between aesthetic taste and purchase intention, it does not prove that he is the decisive factor in promoting consumer purchase (Toufani S, Stanton J P and Chikweche T.,2017) .Nowadays, milk tea brands are more and more competitive, what type of milk tea are available, and many people say that they have some aesthetic fatigue when they see these milk tea brands. However, milk tea is a product that young people can afford, so the demand for milk tea is still very large, and milk tea has gradually become a part of young people's lives that cannot be ignored. In order to help brand designers accurately find the design direction and promote the positioning of milk tea brand design, it is necessary to find out how the visual aesthetic in milk tea brand design affects the consumption behavior of college students. We also need to explore deeper motivations for their purchases.

Methodology

The first step is the information gathering stage, the stage of collecting information from theoretical books, literature and experts in the field of brand design. Then, the collected information is categorised and compared, and the second step is the exploratory phase, where a pilot study is done, trying to interview a few participants, analysing some conclusions from their interviews, and evaluating the applicability and feasibility of the methodology in this field. Finally, in the formal investigation phase the participants' ideas are interpreted as possible answers to this research question.

Many studies have explored that the brand image of milk tea will affect the choice of consumers, that attractive packaging design can attract young consumers to buy, and that some famous brands will attract a large number of young consumers, as well as to analyze the characteristics of the visual design of these brands, but few studies have explored the intrinsic motivation of college students to buy milk tea brands. Will the visual aesthetic of brand design affect their consumption choices, and is their willingness to consume related to their past personal experiences ? This generation of young people actually began to drink milk tea from a very young age, they actually have a lot of experience and experience in drinking milk tea, so whether these young groups choose the current milk tea brand has some relationship with their personal experience and experience? Whether their previous experience has influenced their current choice of milk tea brands, this paper will use qualitative research to explain the influence of visual aesthetics of brand design on the purchasing decisions of young groups.

Phenomenology

Qualitative research is based on different theories such as phenomenology, symbolic interactivity, and constructivism, emphasizing experience, understanding, and meaning, and using different methods to collect, analyze, and interpret research data (Sharan B, 2009). Phenomenology takes the subjective experience of an individual's daily life as the object of study and is often used to understand the interpretations and meanings associated with life experiences. Phenomenologists scrutinize individuals in order to discover the deeper meaning of lived experience in the individual's relationship to space, time, and personal history (Pollio, H.R., Henley, T.B. and Thompson, C.J., 1997). The consumers of milk tea brand are young people. We try to understand their subjective experience of milk tea brand from the personal life experience of young consumers, better understand their perception of milk tea brand design and aesthetics, and find out the key factors and deep meanings of visual aesthetic influence on their consumption behavior.

IPA

The phenomenon of interpretive phenomenology (IPA), developed by philosophers such as Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur emphasises the role of interpretation and understanding in human experience, especially in linguistic and cultural contexts (Rapport, F., 2005).

The key to interpretative phenomenological analysis is the ability to examine and interpret the "lived experience" of the research participants. In research conducted using interpretative phenomenological analysis, this method allows researchers to establish connections with study participants, which can benefit some aspects of the research. As a "participant-centered" approach, the analytical method of interpretative phenomenology encourages participants to express themselves and their thoughts and personal experiences as they see fit, without any distortion of their thoughts. (Alase A, 2017). Heidegger (1962) said that human beings are somehow integrated into their world, resulting in subjective experiences that are closely related to society, culture, and so on. Although individuals have freedom of choice, this freedom is not absolute and is influenced by specific conditions in People's Daily lives. Hermeneutic phenomenology, on the other hand, will focus on describing the meaning of an individual's "existence" and how those meanings affect the choices they make, rather than seeking absolutely true, purely descriptive categories in the stories and descriptions of the participants. To understand young people's personal choice of milk tea brand, their consumption behavior must be influenced in some way, which makes a milk tea brand have special significance for them and makes them make choices. Whether visual aesthetics in brand design will have an impact on the consumption behaviors of young consumers, it is necessary to find young consumers to participate in my research, explore the nature of their purchase of milk tea brands, understand their thinking mode of implementing purchase behaviors, and understand whether there are specific reasons for choosing a certain brand, such as brand effect or cultural habits. Or because of the beautiful packaging visual design or aesthetic taste.

Method

This paper will use semi-structured interview that in-depth interviews with 18–28 years old young people, Research shows that the main consumers of milk tea are young people born between 1996 and 2012 (Lin, X., Yang, J. and Chen, Q., 2023). In this study, young adult customers are selected as representative samples for two reasons. First of all, compared with the limited allowance for high school students, most young adults get a monthly allowance from their parents or find a job, and they have the ability to make their own purchasing

decisions. So we can conduct surveys on consumer preferences more accurately. Secondly, young adults have better understanding and can understand the content of interviews(Lin, X., Yang, J. and Chen, Q.,2023).The opening interview questions were structured to appeal to the respondents' interest phenomena – the visual aesthetics and design in milk tea brands and their consumption experience. The follow-up questions were spontaneously derived from the responses to the opening questions – inviting respondents to extrapolate from their lived experiences in those moments of consumption characterized by design and visual aesthetic.

Data Collection

This research will also use thematic analysis to interpret the interview data collected. Thematic analysis is a type of qualitative research that is considered to be the most suitable method for any research that attempts to uncover issues through interpretation (Alhojailan, M.I., 2012). Through the use of thematic analysis, it is possible to link the various concepts and ideas of the participants and compare them with data collected by other or the same participant at different times and in different situations during the project, to analyse, classify and suggest thematic patterns related to the data. Data collection for thematic analysis is based on observation, and the participant's visual, sensory or attitudinal is in thematic analysis is integral to the study of milk tea brand design visual aesthetics influencing young consumers' consumption behaviour, where the brand design relies on the consumer's visual, sensory and cognitive perceptions. In order to discover common themes and ideas from multiple participants, the thematic analysis method is well suited to provide a narrative of the different data.

In qualitative research analysis, interview transcripts should be transcribed verbatim and analysed and categorised using colour coding. The first thing to do when about to begin the data coding process is to read through the interview responses to identify common themes; search for words or phrases that recur in participants' responses; this helps to narrow down and condense the words or sentences in the interview transcripts. Next, reread each interview transcript or listen to any recording devices used during the interview to again ensure accuracy. After reading the interview transcripts for the third time, the researcher can summarise some of the themes, understand the patterns of responses from the research participants and categorise their responses. Finally, the researcher must write paragraph summaries and structured summaries of the participants' written transcripts (Alase A, 2017).

Limitations

The qualitative research method is adopted in this study, and it is not difficult to find young participants aged 18-25. However, due to the phenomenological methodology, which mainly focuses on their subjective experience and opinions, and the thematic analysis method is used to present the research data relying on interpretation, the research results may become subjective and biased. It may be difficult to collect data, which cannot fully represent the views of the general public. When sampling, we should try to find young consumers from different regions with different life backgrounds. The IPA approach can focus deeply on the individual's point of view and see the problem through the eyes of young consumers, but may ignore the collective experience. It is possible to make interpretation errors, to miss the big picture, to get bogged down in details, or to over-describe meaning. These limitations may prevent the study from generalizing to a wider population.

Conclusion

This paper first introduces my research background and purpose through extensive literature review. Through these previous literatures, it can be concluded that the visual aesthetic of brand design has a positive impact on the behavior of young consumers, and good visual design can promote consumer purchase to a certain extent. However, there is no direct or decisive relationship between the visual aesthetic of milk tea brand and the consumption behavior of young consumers, so this is what I need to further explore. I have tried to find some research theories and methods through interpretive phenomenology, structured interviews and thematic analysis to make my research purpose clearer. With young consumers as the main body, the nature of design is people-oriented. Therefore, it is more appropriate to use phenomenological methodology to pay attention to the life experience of young people, to explore the relationship between their subjective experience and the visual aesthetics of milk tea brands, and to dig out how brand visual aesthetics affects their consumption behaviors. Due to limited time, there is no more available methodology. Through more in-depth research, it may use different methodologies in different research stages, or find more suitable methods for this research.

Reference list

Shi, W., Yang, C. and Yu, P., 2021, December. Brand new milk tea market: Chinese milk tea development and brand analysis. In 2021 3rd International Conference on Economic Management and Cultural Industry (ICEMCI 2021) (pp. 2639-2647). Atlantis Press.

Yun, H., Xiao, L., Jingjing, L. and Lin, W.(2022) Visual Elements in Brand Aesthetics: A Review and Prospects. *Foreign Economics & Management*, 44(08), pp.121-137.

Siyu,Z. and Qian C.(2023)On the application of Chinese style in modern milk tea packaging design.*Chinese Packaging*,43(08),pp.47-49.

Wen, B.L.J. and Aun, N.B.(2020) Factors influencing consumers ' purchase intention in Klang Valley, Malaysia: A study of bubble milk tea. *BERJAYA J. Serv. Manag*, 13, pp.29-43.

Lin, X., Yang, J. and Chen, Q.(2023)College students' preferences for milk tea: Results from a choice experiment. *Foods*, 12(7), p.1491.

Reimann, M., Schilke, O. and Thomas, J.S.(2010)Toward an understanding of industry commoditization: Its nature and role in evolving marketing competition. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 27(2), pp.188-197.

Reimann, M., Zaichkowsky, J., Neuhaus, C., Bender, T. and Weber, B.(2010) Aesthetic package design: A behavioral, neural, and psychological investigation. *Journal of consumer psychology*, 20(4), pp.431-441.

Zolli, A.(2004) Why design matters more. *American Demographics*, 26, pp.52-55.

Brunner, R.J., Emery, S. and Hall, R.(2008).Do you matter?: *how great design will make people love your company*. FT Press.

Yue T.(2010)The trend of enterprise brand visual design. *Economic management*, 22(85), pp.85

Handoko, I.(2022)What approach and avoidance factors drive Gen-Z consumers to buy bubble tea? An exploratory study. *Young Consumers*, 23(3), pp.382-396.

Norman, D. A. (2004)Emotional design: Why we love (or hate) everyday things. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bloch, P. H., Brunel, F. F., & Arnold, T. J. (2003)Individual differences in the centrality of visual product aesthetics: Concept and measurement. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(4), 551-565.

Toufani, S., Stanton, J.P. and Chikweche, T.(2017) The importance of aesthetics on customers' intentions to purchase smartphones. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 35(3), pp.316-338.

Thompson, C.J.,(1997)Interpreting consumers: A hermeneutical framework for deriving marketing insights from the texts of consumers' consumption stories. *Journal of marketing Research*, 34(4), pp.438-455.

Alase A. The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A guide to a good qualitative research approach[J]. *International journal of education and literacy studies*, 2017, 5(2): 9-19.

Koerich, G.H., Trevisol, N.P. and de Sousa, R.P.L.(2020)Luxury and technology: a phenomenological analysis of the Louis Vuitton designer handbags Canvas of the Future. *ModaPalavra e-periódico*, 13(29), pp.203-228.

Alhojailan, M.I.(2012)Thematic analysis: a critical review of its process and evaluation. *In WEI international European academic conference proceedings*, Zagreb, Croatia.

Rapport, F.(2005) Hermeneutic phenomenology: the science of interpretation of texts. *Qualitative research in health care*, 5, pp.125-146.

Sharan, B.(2009) *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Wiley.

Heidegger, M.(1962)*Being and time* Harper. New York, p.589.

Pollio, H.R., Henley, T.B. and Thompson, C.J.(1997) *The phenomenology of everyday life: Empirical investigations of human experience*. Cambridge University Press.