

Designing “Hometown Feeling” Into Products

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Abstract. Hometown is always full of childhood memories and energy for life. Hometown, as a subject for cultural and creative products can help novice designers express their feelings. Designers are bound to create unique and attractive cultural and creative products with such outpouring of sentiment of hometown. There are three major categories of design elements that can be developed from hometown as a topic: natural environment, festival and folk arts, and artificial constructions. The study chooses the program which was conducted in the Product Development Course as a case study. This course was scheduled for junior students under the Department of Industrial Design, National United University. This study attempts to discover how the feelings of hometown will impact designers, and how those feelings are embodied in their cultural and creative products. The goal of this study is to provide consumers a type of commodity that combines emotional connections and usefulness in order to present valued cultural and creative products that demonstrate local color and at the same time meet the needs of modern life by way of transforming the meaning and style of cultural elements.

Keywords: Feeling of "hometown", cultural and creative product design.

1 Introduction

Taiwan has been focused on producing “physical products” (Consumer Electronics for example) in the past when technological techniques were under development. Now we are striving to develop “Cultural Artifacts” in which cultural value is added. As for the future, we should direct our effort to produce “experience products” which promote Taiwanese life styles. [1] Cultural and Creative Industry seemed to be in a blossoming state with government’s support/ promotion along with the cooperation of industry, official and academic areas. However, there are enough cultural depth but did not show its rich connotation in current plight of the cultural creativity. It has unlimited creativity in design, but rarely touches people’s hearts; it has diversity in product types, but is scarcely accepted by consumers [2]. In academic areas, cultural and creative product design courses have been an important theme within design-related departments. We can detect this phenomenon by the artworks of Young Designers’ Exhibition, YODEX. Industrial Design type works have grown in quantity in recent years. (One of factors that judges put emphasis on is cultural quality: works that show the depth of culture, speciality and express the image of Taiwan are highly encouraged.) Based on the data

gathered from Young Designers' Exhibition, YODEX website in 2011 and 2012, total registration numbers in 2012 have increased by 29% compared with the number in 2011, 2612 pieces of work in 2011 and 3376 pieces in 2012; among those registration numbers, Product Design genre increased by 4% (1296 pieces increased to 1349), and Industrial Design genre has increased by 35% (391 pieces increased to 528 pieces.) From this we can see that craft & art type of cultural creative products is now what students are enthusiastic about. Therefore, determining the theme would be critical when instructing students who are new to the study of cultural creativity product design to accomplish a work that is creative and also arouses a certain degree of feelings within the designer. The theme of "hometown" affects everyone's memory and emotions. In this study, we try to induce strong sensational thoughts in students who lack life experiences and by using diverse design elements we can thus create unique cultural creative products.

2 Design Elements of "Hometown"

2.1 Affection of Hometown

Take Shiy Der Chin (1934-1981), an important painter in contemporary Taiwan society as an example. When learning Arts at Paris in 1960s, Shiy Der Chin continually found himself in between modern arts and nostalgia. Shiy said: When I was away from my hometown, I was just like a plant rooted in the wrong place. I needed nutrition from my hometown, lived in my own country, felt the lives and emotions of my people. This is from where I created my art sense. Taiwan gives lives and original source to my works that Paris could not [3]. In contemporary culture and literature critics, city is quite an important subject; it is the contrasting idea of the countryside. The former represents the creation of cultivation which implies noise and disturbance, the latter represents the wonderful notion of rural life as simple, natural, and unadulterated[4]. For some artists, the subject of creation is closely tied with their affection for hometown. When Marc Chagall (artist, 1887-1985) was away from his hometown for further development in Paris, he painted his hometown, village, land and animals. Each work demonstrates Chagall's deep memories for his hometown and represents his searching for hometown and memories [5]. Accumulated memory is something that is totally personal and one of a single human's creations that can't be copied or imitated; it is impossible that two people share the same memory. Each structure of memory is utterly individual and also the collection of personal characteristics [6].

Sometimes, the measurement of emotion has something to do with geographic location or environments that indicate some special meanings. By memorizing, recording, writing and daily living activities, people generate subjective notions for the space, and a meaning for a place thus formed and created. It is the accumulation of the interaction between personal life experiences and the environment [7]. Jioufen located in New Taipei City was once a prosperous township of gold mining, and when the gold sources dried up, Jioufen were back to silence. However, Jioufen has its unique geographical landscape. Located within the hills in northeast Taiwan Jioufen village is next to the Mt. Keelung and faces the sea near the coast. The whole little town is located on

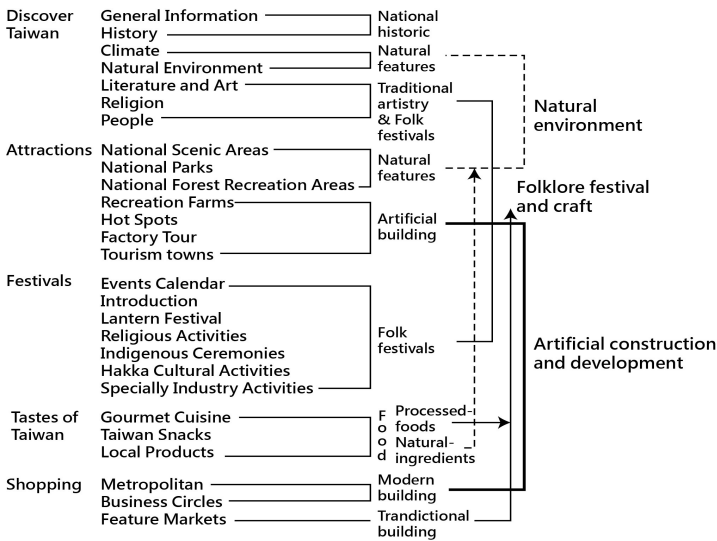
the hill, so it is famous for its narrow steep stair scene. In 1989, the film “City of Sadness” was released which wakened people's memory of Jioufen. It seems that the prosperous old streets, buildings, mines and the glamorous gold digging days are flashing before our eyes. Jioufen thus became one of the 10 most popular spots in Taiwan. At the same time, Jioufen is also the hometown of the director and playwright of the film “City of Sadness”, who has multiple identities as a director, writer and script writer. He is recognized as the greatest storyteller in Taiwan [8]. The geographical landscape of Jioufen surely has greatly influenced people who live there for their rich life experiences. Influence of culture shock of two hometown for immigrants who are usually more than the non-immigrant stronger. Daniel Libeskind (born 1946), an architect of Polish-Jewish descent, was selected to be the master planner for rebuilding the World Trade Center site in New York City. His parents are Holocaust survivors; his family moved to Israel in 1957 and the Libeskind family moved to New York City on one of the last immigrant boats to the United States in 1959. His architectural work is spreading all around the world. In his speech inaugurating the rebuilding of the World Trade Center site, Daniel Libeskind said: “My plan was called ‘Memory Foundations’: I told them I recalled my memories about our family first arrived here by ship at the Port of New York when I stood in the bottom of the pit, just in the near ocean, at that time I was looking up at the Statue of Liberty, this memory became one of sources of inspiration for my design.” Because Daniel Libeskind listens to experiences, his work touches people and arouses wide sympathy, and it demonstrates that there are plenty of feelings within people's heart [9]. that's why he is so well acknowledged and has won many international competitions. Hometown evokes strong emotions that many people can relate to.

2.2 Classification of Hometown Design Elements

The purpose of “hometown” theme applied to cultural and creative products discussed in this study is to promote distinctive features of cities, villages, towns and places in Taiwan. Thus, people can refer to the information on the website of the Tourism Bureau, Republic of China (Taiwan) to see what the features that are worthy of Taiwan promoting are. Features are properly categorized as design material references used for the design project that we discuss in this study. This Feature category provides students with preliminary concepts for cultural and creative product design which also helps them to have a good start. There are 8 subjects on the website of the Tourism Bureau, Republic of China (Taiwan), which are listed as follows: 1. Discover Taiwan: General Information, Climate, Natural Environment, History, Literature and Art, Religion and People 2. Attractions: National Scenic, National Parks, National Forest, Recreation Farms, Hot Spots, Factory Tour and Tourism Towns. 3. Festival: Events Calendar, traditional festivals, Lantern Festival, Religious Activities, Indigenous Ceremonies, Hakka Cultural Activities, Specially industry Activities. 4. Tastes of Taiwan: Gourmet Cuisine, Taiwan Snack, Local Product Products. 5. Shopping: Metropolitan, Business Circles, Feature Markets, Leading Brands Circles, Souvenir Shops. Others are 6. Travel Suggestions, 7. Accommodations and 8. Getting Around: Transportation Guides. Subjects 6, and 7 are excluded for further analysis as they are pertain only to travel

information rather than to physical descriptions of Taiwan. Thus we select subjects 1-5 for analysis as demonstrated in Table 1. In subject 1, general introduction covers 3 perspectives of knowledge including nation history, natural scenery, traditional crafts and festivals. The travel spots listed in Subject 2 introduce natural environmental areas and traditional architectures. Subject 3 includes all of the traditional festivals and a wide varieties of cuisines are listed in Subject 4, food types are divided into nature ingredients like fruits & vegetables and processed foods. As for the Subject 5, it presents metropolitan, modern development and shopping areas that coexist with traditional markets/architecture and foods. Thus we have 3 categories, natural sceneries belongs to ‘Natural Environments’ with the ecological and environmental concepts,

Table 1. The analysis of three design elements of Taiwan features by the Tourism Bureau Taiwan



‘Traditional Folk Arts & Festivals’ and Artificial Construction Development’ which refer to modern society construction compare traditional activities and images. Ingredient Foods are under the ‘Natural Environments’ category since they are products of natural environments, and processed foods thus are under the ‘Artistry & Festivals’ category. Traditional architecture is protected under modern construction development as historical sites, as a way that we to save traditional culture and therefore it belongs to the ‘Artistry & Festivals’ category. As demonstrated in Table 1, the design elements of “hometown” are categorized into 3 major types: 1. Natural Environments; 2. Artistry & Festivals and; 3. Artificial Construction Development. These categories are used as the reference for the “hometown” subject design project, in hopes of guiding young designers to create more types of cultural and creative products. We assume that categories: 1. Natural Environments, and 3. Technology permeated and defined modern

culture[10], Artificial Construction Development could likely lead to more modern cultural and creative products while 2. Artistry & Festivals should thus bring more traditional elements into the products.

3 Case Study

3.1 Twelve Design Cases

These twelve cases are from a project called “Cultural and Creative Design,” and which used “My Hometown” as the subject matter. The project was conducted as part of a junior-year course named Products Design Development under the Department of Industrial Design, National United University, during 2011. Chosen from 50 works, these cases with total scores are over 80 points were judged superior. According to their different properties, they are divided into three groups. As hometown is the subject matter, the project expects each student to design a product that can present local color, meet with a favorable reception in modern life, and be promoted nationwide or even to the world stage with integration of local landscape, crafts, and culture. As shown in table 2 the works are: group A takes the natural environment as the design element, in table 3 the works are: group B focuses on folk arts, and in table 4 the works are : group C addresses artificial construction.

Table 2. The description of Group A. Design elements by the natural environment

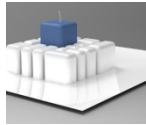


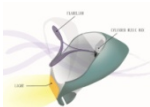




			
A1. Pei-Yu Sung @2011	A2. Yuch-Hsin Hsu @2011	A3. Chia-Ju Wan @2011	A4. Liwun Zeng @2011
Hometown: Keelung Subject: Tofu-rock candlestick	Hometown: Miaoli Subject: Pretty berry	Hometown: Taoyuan Subject: Meet lotus	Hometown: Hsinchu Subject: Chasing wind
There is a special tofu rock geology in Keelung Peace Island. The feeling is present in the product between seawater and tofu rock, a kind of interaction between the liquid and solid. The product can be taken home to enjoy the scenery as you can see it on the coast.	The family's source of income is the cultivation of strawberries, so profound feeling with them. The profile and pedicle of a strawberry becomes the product type of shape to create a sweet time for enjoying strawberries.	Lotus is the main economic crop in the agricultural township of Guanyin in Taoyuan county. Tableware links lotus and Guanyin township, and to shows the features of the lotus "out from the mud without being contaminated"	Trumpet-like terrain created Hsinchu wind -a famous city. Designed for LOHAS bicycle lights, the form is trumpet-shaped, the curve of fan blades as the wind, the power of light and music as produced by the wind.

Table 3. The description of Group B. Design elements by folklore festival and craft

			
<p>B1.Wen-In Lin @2011</p>	<p>B2. Shiun-Ling Li@2011</p>	<p>B3.Ying-Shiou Chen @2011</p>	<p>B4.Chia-Cheng Liu @2011</p>
<p>Hometown: Meinong Subject: Meinong's wedding favors</p>	<p>Hometown: Kinmen Subject: Baby Sling of wind-lion-lords</p>	<p>Hometown:Tainan Subject: Gold Lion</p>	<p>Hometown: Chiayi Subject: Lion eye</p>
<p>For Hakka people the paper umbrella symbolizes auspicious significance and so the paper umbrella and the wedding accessories combined offer a blessing for happiness for each of the wedding guests. The entire set consists of a spice jar, sauce dish and chopsticks.</p>	<p>There are inner meaning of quell wind and anti-evil and peace within Kinmen Wind-Lion-lords. To design the inner meaning of wind-lion lords into baby sling. When baby has grown up the sling becomes a mother's bag.</p>	<p>There are inner meaning of "festivity and peace" is brought from the lead lion-Gold Lion of song-jiang-troupe of wujhu-lin in Tainan. The letter opener is the object for product design. When we were receiving the letter and the letter was opened, just like to get the message with missing for festivity and peace.</p>	<p>The styling of teapot is according to Koji ceramic of Lion-Eye in Chiayi. The transparent part of teapot is a symbol of Lion-Eye , as well as the hollow eyeball become a tea container. The Lion-Eye can take care the feeling while we are steeping and drinking tea.</p>

Table 4. The description of Group C. Design elements by artificial construction and development

			
<p>C1.Wan-Lin Yang@2011</p>	<p>C2.Yi-Wen Chen@2011</p>	<p>C3.Yenting Lin @2011</p>	<p>C4.Mei-Hui Lu@2011</p>
<p>Hometown: Kaohsiung Subject: Return to harbor</p>	<p>Hometown: Taipei Subject: Happiness of Military Village</p>	<p>Hometown: Kaohsiung Subject: Make your own Kaohsiung memory</p>	<p>Hometown: Taipei Subject: Gathering happiness</p>
<p>The starting point is by Kaohsiung. Like a safe haven for the Kaohsiung people, home is a safe haven for everyone. I hope to increase the family close interaction. We go out every day for commuting or going to school as our departure back to port. Putting up the key chain action as we cast off the anchors on dry land.</p>	<p>Sih-Sih South Village is the first military dependents in the capital, Taipei, Taiwan. The stacker of nostalgic picture frame was designed by the image of dwarf room of military dependents, and the material was wood.</p>	<p>The idea of disposable film camera came from container of Kaohsiung harbor, the concept of loading memory was inspired by the appearance of container. Each purchase the disposable film camera is brand new one as the symbol of empty container, after use it just like to load your memory inside.</p>	<p>The design subject is the Taipei Yuanshan children's playground. It is hoped that through this product, based on the elements of the shape and color of playgrounds famous rides that the design - a playable and available memo clip for fun - allows the user to temporarily forget some troubles.</p>

3.2 Classification and Analysis

This part of the study is classified into three main points referring to each designer’s hometown and topic:

1. There are connections between the type of a designer’s urban-rural style and his chosen design elements:

(1) The theme for group A is the natural environment; hence the style of hometown in group A is famous for its regional agricultural products, such as strawberries from Dahu Township in Miaoli County, lotus from Guanyin in Taoyuan County. Counties with special geographical features are also included. For example, the tofu rocks from Keelung (A1), and the wind of Hsinchu county (A4) also belong to this group. (2) The design topic for group B is festival and folk arts. Therefore, the ones chosen in this group are regions which are abundant with traditional and cultural heritages. For instance, Tainan, which has the most first-ranked historical sites (B3), is full of this type of design elements; others like the well-known Winding Lion Gods in Kinmen, traditional oil paper umbrella art in Meinong, Kaohsiung, and lion-eye teapot from Chaiyi, originated from regional festivals. (3) Artificial construction is the subject matter of group C. This group focuses on thriving international metropolises, for example, the two special municipalities, Kaohsiung City (C1, C3) and Taipei City (C2, C4). Obviously, designers who were born and grew up in big cities seem to have more images of and sentiments about modern rather than traditional construction culture.

2. Group B, which uses festivals and folk arts as major design element, is the traditional style of cultural and creative products, and is the most popular group among students as well. Beginners who choosing the style of group B have a slight chance to fail, and their design is readily approved. Although the natural environment has existed on this plant earlier than cultures and history, Group B’s festival and folk arts is incomparable when it comes to study and application of cultural and creative commodities. Human beings do not treat nature with enough veneration and there is concern for why, to some degree, human care more about things created by themselves than about nature. In group C, designers use artificial construction as the design element, which is also the modern one of the three. To young designers, this group is closer to their lifestyle than the other two groups. Therefore, it turned out to be the type of element least picked by students. Because of two reasons:(1)The existing design cases of group C are less than group A and B, no reference cases are difficult to design to the novice designers.(2)Few students live in metropolis in the National United University. However, many interesting designs emerged in this group because it strikes a chord in the heart of designers the most. This is supposed to be the kind of commodities of culture and creativity with a huge potential market.

3. It is the genre of cultural elements of hometown that influences the final style of cultural and creative product design. In this design project, the most emotional cultural elements of hometown are selected and used to design daily necessities that people nowadays would use. So, the two most design elements for this design project that designers all should use are “cultural elements” and “daily necessities”, and it is the genre of cultural elements that determine if the final work is in traditional or modern style of commodity. We can say that the selected cultural elements will influence more

than the type of daily necessities, which after all are just objects that people would use everyday. Again, the design style determining point is depends on the selected cultural elements of hometown: elements that fit into category 2. ‘Artistry & Festivals’, elements of category 3. ‘Artificial Construction Development,’ or modern style of design elements that belongs to category 1. ‘Natural Environments.’

3.3 Product Association- Cultural Features Transformed into Product Design Feature Level

Design cases analyzed in 3-2 have mentioned the transformation of cultural images and types. In other words, designers use cultural feature derived elements when creating products. Evaluating what types of products match perfectly with what design element applications is crucial as this also determines if the product is likely to be successful because it influences the final presentation. We might overlook aspects of users' experiences that are important to them[11]. As a consequence, according to Chi-Hsuan Hsu (2004), Rung-Tai Lin, (2005) in the later phase of designing, cultural features transform products in properties and levels and thus provide the criteria for product association. We can refer to 3 cultural levels demonstrated in Fig.1: physical/material, behavioral /social, spiritual/idea. Taking A1 Tofu Rocks Candlestick as the subject, we can analyze the three cultural levels and properties of it in section 3-3. In outer (physical) level, the appearance and texture of Tofu Rocks (blocks of tofu-shaped rocks) belong to the visual level that relates to the shape of the product. For mid (behavior) level, it indicates the function and operation of the product (the crevices between the blocks become the space for candles). This can be viewed as the usability level. For the inner (physiological) level, it tells the story and meaning of the product: the interaction of sea water and tofu rocks, the interaction of liquid and solid material, just like melting liquid wax pouring over the candlestick forms crevices between blocks which resembles the scene of waves lashing Tofu Rocks. This is once again the representation of experiences and memories.

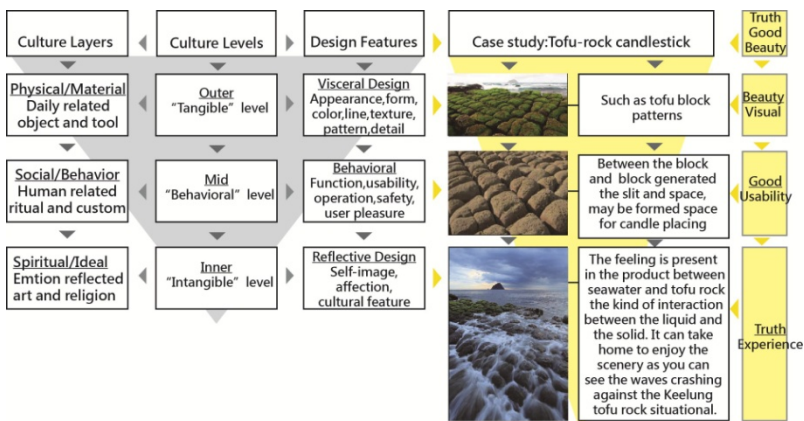


Fig. 1. Case study of Tofu-rock candlestick by Attributes of cultural product design (Hsu, 2004; Lin, 2007)

After analyzing the three cultural levels of the cultural elements, how do we decide the most suitable product type to use? Combining cultural materials with design for daily necessities and the physical representation of the product is the final purpose. According to the result that derives from Fig.1, the final phase of this design case analysis is to do “Product Association”. As seen in Table5, after determining the cultural layer, cultural level and design features of the product, there comes the “keyword” for the particular level and layer that represent the product best and which most precisely describe the product. We then use this keyword to do further association of that particular product. Brainstorming is a good method for evaluating the three vital levels of cultural products which are: visual beauty, usability good and true representation of experiences/memories. We evaluate all of the criteria of the product to decide if it confirms the beauty, good and trueness principles, and then the most accurate product type would emerge. This also means that the designer has reached the census and design motivation for this certain cultural element and product type.

Table 5. Product Association - Cultural characteristics transform into product design features level

Culture Levels	Culture Layers	Design Features	Key word	Product Association (housewares)	Evaluation		
					B	G	T
Outer "Tangible" level	Such as tofu block patterns	[Beauty] Visual	Massive cutting	Chessboard, puzzles, Collage floors, chocolate, food cutter, palette, makeup plate, jewelry design, tiles			
			Tofu	Quilts, nail files, shelves, racks, modular, racks			
Mid "Behavioral" level	Between the block and block generated the slit and space, may be formed space for candle placing	[Good] Usability	Pick up Placed Fixed Move	Checkerboard palette, make-up tray, shelves, racks, modular racks			
Inner "Intangible" level	The feeling is present in the product between seawater and tofu rock the kind of interaction between the liquid and solid.	[Truth] Experience	Interaction between the liquid and solid.	Vases, potted plants, tableware / plate, condiment bottles, cups			
			Liquid→Sold	→Ice Box,	V	V	
			Sold→Liquid	→Ice cream container		V	V
			Liquid→Gas	→Candlestick → Flavor container	V	V	V
						V	

4 Conclusion

Cultural creative design is facing a new market phase now that consumers are setting higher standards for products, thus exploring for new themes and inspirations would be the solution. In this “hometown” theme cultural and creative product design project we have categorized and analyzed the travel features of Taiwan on the Tourism Bureau, Republic of China (Taiwan) website in order to provide Design major students with diverse references. Then we make designers examine if there are unique cultural properties of their hometown that can touch both them and consumers. In consequence, we can conclude this study with the three points below:

1. Design elements of the natural environment and artificial construction development have higher potentials for further development; it contains fresher and more modern senses, and it might better suit the new generation designers in finding a whole new style of cultural creative product design.
2. Cultural elements should go with practical products and by cultural meaning and types of transformations, consumers are provided with products that have double values; functional products that have emotion connections. This would expand the cultural and creative product markets.
3. Products applied with an inner layer or spiritual type of cultural elements evoke more emotions that designers have towards their hometown, and are easier to present in-depth cultural and creative product design.

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