

# Discussion on the Aesthetic Function Design of Pet Staple Food Packaging

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## ABSTRACT

This article starts with the current situation of the pet market and pet food packaging, analyzes the various possibilities of pet staple food packaging design through examples, and discusses the aesthetic function of pet staple food packaging from the aspects of packaging color, pattern and structure. Finally, a reasonable development direction is proposed for the design of pet staple food packaging.

**Keywords:** packaging design, pet staple food, aesthetic function

## I. INTRODUCTION

For pet owners, pet staple food is one of the most in-demand daily products. In recent years, the pet market has continued to grow, and there are more and more competing products of the same type as the staple food of pets. Packaging usually affects consumers' first impression of the product. In addition to the quality and function of the product itself, the reasonable and eye-catching packaging design also enables the product to take advantage and stand out in a series of pet staple foods.

## II. DEVELOPMENT STATUS OF PET MARKET AND PET STAPLE FOOD PACKAGING

Although the pet industry, as an emerging industry, has just been active in the view of the Chinese public in recent decades, the market value it creates and the potential for development have made it impossible for people to ignore. According to statistics released by the Prospective Industry Research Institute, by the end of 2018, the market size of China's pet industry will reach 170.8 billion yuan, an increase of nearly 11 times compared with 2010 [1], in which pet dogs and pet cats occupy the entire pet market. For a large part, more and more people choose to keep pets such as cats and dogs as a companion. Whether it is to relieve people's pressure in life, or to the child's childhood growth and the care of the empty nesters, there always is a subtle and positive effect.

Pet food as a kind of necessities for keeping pets has a large market share in the entire pet supplies market [2]. Until 2018, the size of Chinese pet food market is close to 60 billion yuan [3], accounting for 35% of the entire pet industry. Among them, pet staple food grain occupies the majority. Although many pet families still use the leftovers to feed pets, but with the reduction of people's free time and the more balanced nutrition of pet food, more and more pet owners choose the staple food which can be gained in the market instead. This feeding method makes pet feeding more convenient and it helps the pet owners save a lot of time.

At present, the pet industry in Europe and the United States has developed relatively well, and pet food as the largest sub-industry of the pet industry has a high maturity in the entire pet market. Many pet staple food grain in this area are also recognized in the pet market in other countries. Compared with European and American countries, China's pet industry is not mature enough, but it is in rapid development [4]. There are three main sources of pet staple food: one is the import of foreign products; the other is made by foreign investors in China; the third is produced by Chinese local brands [5]. Due to the restrictions of long-distance transportation and import control, the source of China's pet staple food is mainly based on the latter. With the continuous popularization of the Internet, online shopping has become one of the important ways for pet owners to obtain pet staple food. In addition, pet supply stores, pet hospitals, and department stores also sell pet food.

Compared with some developed countries, Chinese pet industry started late relatively. The domestic Chinese pet food brands are relatively small, and some foreign brands are still in a dominant position.

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However, we still can see that some Chinese domestic pet food brands are emerging in recent years and they are trying to cater to the rapid development trend of the pet industry. Compared with other food products, pet staple food grain has a characteristic, whose consumers and users are not the same. They are often purchased by pet owners firstly, and then pets can eat it. Therefore, many pet food brands change their attention slowly from the pet food product itself to its packaging. Start with the effect, seek breakthrough points, and attract consumers to buy. However, as far as the pet food currently seen on the market are concerned, the packaging design of many pet staple food grain is not novel and interesting enough. The different classifications of the same brand of pet staple food grain are not obvious in the packaging design, and even the packaging between brands and brands. There are similar situations in the design, the brand is weakly identifiable, and the pet food market still needs to be continuously improved.

### III. CONSUMER AUDIENCE OF PET STAPLE FOOD

The biggest difference between pet food and human food in the entire sales process is the separation of consumers and users. A person is a purchaser of pet food, but can only purchase it based on the sensory experience of the product package, the evaluation from others, and the reaction of the pet after eating, but cannot through its taste. Therefore, the packaging design of pet staple food is particularly important; consumers first judge the quality of the product through packaging design [6]. The purchasers of pet staple food grain can be roughly divided into fixed consumer groups and potential consumer groups [7].

Fixed consumer groups, that is, pet owners, pet hospitals, pet hotels and other pet institutions, such consumer groups often purchase pet staple food grain regularly due to the needs of feeding pets. For some experienced pet owners and pet agencies, the exaggerated pattern design on the packaging may not be the first consideration for the purchase of pet staple food, the composition of raw materials, brand reputation, cost-effective or humanized design options are the main content of their consideration, so the brand should put the advantages of its products in a more conspicuous position in the whole pet staple food packaging, in order to attract consumers to purchase behavior. For pet owners with less experience, the overall feeling of pet staple food packaging seems more important to them in the whole process of purchase. How to use proper expression and design techniques to capture the view of consumers is the first business for merchants to consider.

Potential consumer groups, that is, some caring people in the society, do not have pets, but when they

encounter stray animals, they will give some pet food to them actively. For such groups, some humanized packaging design may get their favor more easily, such as the packaging design with small capacity, high cost performance, or easy to carry and feed.

Pets are the users of the pet staple food. Although people play a vital leading role and decisive role in the purchase of pet food, pets are still direct users of the product. During the process of the pet staple food packaging design, except taking the subjective visual experience of people into account, whose feeling we also need to consider is the direct user of the product - the feeling of animals. The visual sensitivity range of humans and animals is different which results in the colors they can see are also different. In human eyes, it is a colorful packaging design, which may be a gray appearance in the eyes of pets. Taking the pets' feeling into account may be a very important part during the process of pet food packaging design.

### IV. AESTHETIC FUNCTION DESIGN OF PET STAPLE FOOD PACKAGING

#### A. Physical and physiological functions

The physical function of the package is mainly reflected in the protection of the pet staple food. In particular, more and more people are now purchasing pet food through online shopping. The pet staple food needs to be transported for a long time to reach the hands of consumers. The collision, extrusion and wet and unstable environment all may affect the quality and shape of the product [8], therefore, the design of the material and shape of the pet staple packaging is very important. At present, most pet staple food grain on the market range in size from 1kg to 15kg. Most of the materials are made of thick aluminum foil. The overall structure is a thin on the top and wide on the bottom bagged structure, which is easy to store and transport. The bag is filled with nitrogen which would help to alleviate the degree of damage to the pet staple food during the extrusion process; some brands use composite kraft paper for packaging, which is environmentally friendly and moisture-proof.

The physiological function of the pet staple food packaging is mainly reflected in the convenience and humanization during the behavior of people feeding the pet. In order to ensure the external environment interferes the pet food as little as possible, the top of the outer packaging of the pet main grain is generally provided with a self-sealing mouthpiece which can be repeatedly opened and closed whenever they want. This design not only increase the convenience for people in repeated use but also can prevent pet staple food from spoiling, and play a significant role in extending the products' shelf life. In addition, some humanized designs of pet food packaging will also satisfy

consumers' feelings in different environments and create convenient conditions for people to feed their pets. The "Fig. 1" shows a pet food packaging box launched by Toppaw Company of the United States. It adopts a trapezoidal portable box with a handle on the top for the pet owner to feed the pet when going out. Another highlight of this design is the retractable slotted design on the left side of the package. When opened, it can directly act as a "lunch box" for pets. After the pets eat, they can directly take the slot to the original position and seal with a seal. This can be recycled, and it uses cardboard boxes as its material, which not only be environmentally friendly, but also meet the needs of humanity [9].



Fig. 1. A pet food packaging box launched by Toppaw Company of the United States.

<sup>a</sup>. Image from <http://benjamininyi.com>.

In addition, the packaging design of pet staple food should be an easy-to-identify design. It should make the brand image recognizable and memorable through carefully matched colors, eye-catching logos, unique patterns and central visual elements, besides, different series or types of the same brand of pet staple food grain should be easily distinguished, so that consumers can easily select the type of goods they need and optimize the purchase process.

#### B. Visual communication function

The visual experience of pet staple food packaging for consumers and users is mainly composed of functional elements such as color and visual perception, flat pattern and three-dimensional modeling function.

1) *Color and visual perception*: In the previous article, the author mentioned that pet staple food is a special product, which has two consumer audiences, one is the consumer of the pet staple food - the people; the other is the user of the pet staple food - the pet. The rational use of color is conducive to attracting people to purchase behavior. Color is the visual element that directly affects the human eye and promotes people's

corresponding psychological feelings. Merchants can convey the design concept of their brand, the appearance of the pet staple food and even the taste and application objects and other information through color. Color psychology research shows that colorful, well-matched packaging is easy to first notice, giving people a strong visual impact. But for pets, the world in their eyes is mostly not as colorful as our eyes. Many animals are color-blind, or the colors they can see are not enriched comparing with humans [10]. In the case of dogs, there are only two kinds of cones in the retina of the dog, however, there are three kinds of human eyes. This means that the dog can only distinguish the color in some wavelength ranges in the spectrum. Experiments show that the dog can only distinguish the yellow and blue, but have no sense of green and red, just the difference between light and dark. Dogs cannot perceive the hue of red, orange and green, and it is difficult to distinguish green and blue or different shades of purple [11]. When designing the packaging of pet staple food, in addition to considering the visual perception of the package, the designer should also pay attention to the range of color perception that the pet can distinguish, and make different designs for different animal species. What's more, the designer also should avoid placing indecipherable color at a relatively close distance, and the package should use some color types that are visible to the pet, and use different colors of brightness to match and match.

2) *Plane pattern and three-dimensional modeling function*: The graphic design of the package is mainly reflected in the use of patterns and text. The logos, patterns and texts that represent the brand can often impress consumers [12]. Most pet staple food grain on the market contain three elements: graphics or images of pets, logos with brand characteristics, and patterns or hollow designs that reflect the true shape of pet staple food grain. In the packaging design of cat and dog staple food, common realistic pet photos appear to create a pet's cute image, on the one hand to attract consumers' attention, and on the other hand as a symbolic identification information to improve the recognizability of pet food. In the packaging design of the pet main grain, the visual impact intensity of the pattern and the aesthetics, the deformation processing of the text or lines and the reasonable typesetting design factors all affect the emotional experience brought by the goods to the consumers, which leads to the corresponding association and affects the changes of purchasing psychology [13].

The three-dimensional composition of the pet main grain packaging is the design of its shape. A novel packaging shape will always attract people's attention.

For pets, the shaped pet food packaging is more interesting. The packaging shape gives the product an entertainment function for the pet to play, such as the shape of the bone, fish or wool ball for the pet food packaging design. While satisfying the basic protection of goods packaging and the role of containers, it has realized the innovation and personalization of its own brand [14].

## V. CONCLUSION

In recent years, as pets have become more popular and cherished by people, the pet market is growing at a rapid rate. As the primary consumables of pet supplies, pet staple food grain has increasingly attracted the attention of the entire pet industry. Faced with the rapid development of the pet food industry, the packaging design of pet staple food grain should also keep pace with the development of the entire industry. It should not only be functionally humanized, but also meet the needs of people in various environments. Its design should also make breakthrough in appearance in the staple food of pets, and embody the aesthetics of design while create the brand image. What's more, a packaging design of pet staple food must cater to the development trend of green design, and learn from the more mature packaging design in foreign countries, and it should also be continuously optimized and conform to the aesthetic and functional needs of the pet market in the present.

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