An Interpretation of Semiotics in the Display Design of Apple User Experience Store

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ABSTRACT

The theory of semiotics is applied to interpret Apple user experience store and analyze the relationship between Apple brand and experience store. The symbolic content of Apple brand is summarized, and the "signifier" of the brand is corresponding to the "signified" of the experience store. Based on this and the author's design of experience store, the content of display design is analyzed from the perspective of semiotics one by one. Finally, the display symbols of Apple experience store are interpreted, and three key points are identified, namely recognition, balance and experience. Taking the current excellent display space of Apple experience sore as a case, the theoretical research of display space is promoted.

Keywords: Display design, Semiotics, Apple user experience store.

1. INTRODUCTION

Apple user experience store, as a place for customers to connect with merchants, provides customers with quality services. As a model case of current marketing, the success of the user experience store is inseparable from the Apple brand itself. The creation of corporate culture belongs to the category of semiotics theory. How to reflect the concept of brand symbol in the space is a problem to be solved. Many of the implications of the user experience store that Jobs presented through a series of designs are worth exploring. The relationship between the exhibition space and the Apple brand presented can be explained from the perspective of semiotics theory, so as to put forward some new thinking and inspire more ways of exhibition design.

2. THE RELATED CONCEPTS OF SEMIOTICS

Semiotics is a subject that studies symbols, and studies the nature, development rules and significance of symbols, as well as the relationship between symbols and human behavior. [1] More than half a century later, it was gradually applied to the field of art and design, and the contents of semiotics were expanded and rich theoretical achievements were brought.

Saussure, a Swiss linguist, believed that language is a symbolic system of expressing thoughts with sound, and the combination of the symbolic and the represented becomes a symbol, which makes linguistics subordinate to the category of semiotics. [2] He believed that the whole language system could be explained through various forms of association and combination. Therefore, symbols are integral but not isolated, and they are mutually restricted symbol systems. The two words signifier and signified are the basic contents of Saussure's semiotics. The signifier is the sound image of the symbol, while the signified is the conceptual part of the sign. These two parts form a whole, the sign. The signifier refers to the external form of language signs perceived by people, and the signified refers to the internal meaning represented by language signs. The study of western semiotics is based on this basic concept. "The signifier" refers to the external expression level of a symbol, such as the sound and text, which can be intuitively recognized by people, while the "signified" refers to the internal concept level of a symbol, such as the abstract concept and meaning associated by a symbol.

In the brand symbol, the signifier refers to the enterprise name or logo and the corresponding product, which is the first layer of interpretation. The second layer of interpretation is the communication of enterprise spirit. For the sake of marketing, the

brand has some connotation at the level of consciousness, and makes people impressed by the advertising slogan. Therefore, brand symbols will form a pattern. Logo symbols and products help people form the first layer of cognition. The match between products and display space forms the inherent manifestation form of the brand, and then forms the second layer of cognition. On the basis of these denotations, the third level of cognition is generated by the correspondence between the signified of brand spirit and connotation and brand symbol. The brand symbol must be updated with the tides to constantly inject new forms of signified. The continuous injection of internal and external extension makes the brand become a huge symbol system, and the image of the brand is gradually deeply rooted in people's hearts to achieve the purpose of recognizing the signified. After decades of development, Apple has become familiar with the public and its symbol system has become deeply rooted in people's hearts. Once the brand symbol signifier appears, people will think of its content signified.

In the development process of enterprises, brand symbols originally exist in the form of "signifier" to distance themselves from other products, while the "signified" of a brand is limited to the subjective communication goals set by brand communicators. [3] Therefore, it is difficult for consumers to understand the profound meaning represented by the brand symbol. As the core, brand symbol needs to be valued by enterprises. Different methods should be employed to refine easy-to-remember symbols and to communicate them repeatedly to consumers for promotional purposes.

3. APPLE'S IDENTIFICATION DESIGN FOR SYMBOL CONTENT

The popularity of Apple products is driven by symbolic consumption of the brand. Consumers are willing to pay a higher price for Apple's "symbol" value, and customers can obtain more usage value and symbol value than expected by consuming symbols. [4] Therefore, symbols are very important to the brand.

Brand symbol is an abstract concept rather than a specific product. In order to establish a specific symbol image in the mind of consumers, the concept needs to be constantly instilled, gradually solidified and formed with the accumulation of time, and it must comply with the rules of consumers' cognitive process. This impression is reinforced by Apple's superior design that meets consumers' aesthetic needs

and brings new experiences, feedback and symbols to consumers.

3.1 Logo

The apple is a symbol of wisdom in Greek mythology. The apple with a bite is the symbol of Apple, which reflects their desire for high technology and the courage to explore the unknown [5]. The Apple logo as we see it today, however, has evolved over time.

In 1976, a classic design drawn by Ron Wayne with pen became Apple's logo. Inspired by Newton's discovery of gravity under an apple tree, it showed Apple's desire to explore technology. The overall design is complex and unsuitable for practical application. In the same year, it was replaced with an apple with a bite. This colorful apple also symbolizes a rich production line. In 1998, the brand positioning became simple and clear, and the logo was changed to a monochrome Apple icon; In 2001, the color became transparent to match the new Mac OSX system. The Apple logo has a glass feel and changes with the interface of the system. When Apple introduced the iPhone in 2007, Apple Computer Corporation changed to Apple Corporation, adopted the glass logo, and introduced the multi-touch touch screen technology to the iPhone, bringing a new user experience. In 2012 Apple introduced a new logo, the current flat logo, which may mean that the New iPad's Retina display technology will be at the core of Apple's next move (see "Figure 1"). [6]
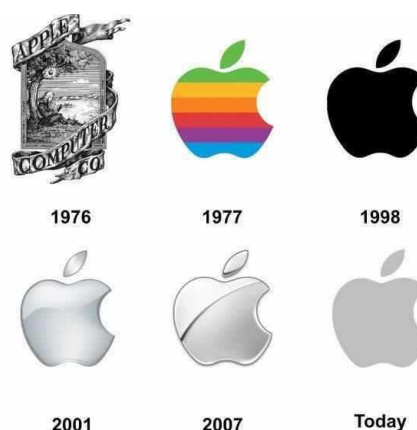

Figure 1 The evolution of the Apple logo Source: Internet.

The change of core products has led to the constant change of Apple logo, which is also the change of the core concept of brand symbol. In Apple's semiotics system, the meaning of symbols rises to a cultural activity, changing consumers' decisions, and the apple also becomes a symbol of

new technological exploration. Only the needs of enterprises are correctly expressed, logo design can be recognized by enterprises and society, to promote the progress of brands and enterprises, so as to promote the progress of society.

3.2 Advertising

In 1984, Apple introduced the Macintosh computer, which ushered in a new era of personal computing. It changed the previous man-machine dialogue mode, the cursor and English commands are turned into a smiling face and convenient mouse interface. The graphical user interface was popularized on personal computers for the first time. [7] For this reason, TWBA designed an advertisement for this product, namely "Apple 1984", which was broadcast only once during the TV broadcast, and caused a huge response, becoming one of the "100 Years Classic Advertisements". The AD focused attention on the changes in the computer itself, arousing consumers' curiosity and desire to buy.

When Jobs returned, he drastically changed the company's schedule, increased the advertising budget, and worked with TBWA again. Liklau then created another classic AD campaign for Apple: Think different series (see "Figure 2"). It inherits the personality of the last advertisement, forms an internal connection between Apple computers and consumers, analyzes consumers' psychology, and meets the psychological needs of consumers to perceive the needs.

Figure 2 Think different. Source: the Internet.

The ads further expand the meaning of Apple's brand symbol system. These two classic advertisements make Apple's products immediately attract a large number of consumers and mark a fashionable brand symbol label in the minds of consumers. To this day, Apple's ads have continued this style. In order to stabilize its brand image, Apple has adopted a series of communication techniques to make its brand personality and product reputation spread all over the world and realize the globalization of Apple fans.

3.3 Marketing

Instead of being pushed out of the market, Apple and its products have taken the world by storm in the era of rapid replacement. After using one of Apple's products, users become so enamored with the brand that they stop using other corporate products.

Apple has a distinct brand personality: unique, innovative, extraordinary, fashionable. And the Apple symbol is very popular with users. Customers stay up all night and queue up to buy, showing their loyalty. The phenomenon of extending from one symbol to another is Apple's unique emoticon. They follow Apple's new products every quarter, fill their lives with Apple products, and influence the people around them with their product worship.

Thanks to years of marketing, Apple fans have developed emotional symbols of loyalty and persistence. Even though there are so many products on the market, Apple fans still only see Apple products. They cheer and scrimp every time Apple launches a new product, an emoticon marketing that few companies can achieve.

4. SYMBOL APPLICATION IN THE APPLE USER EXPERIENCE STORE

The above analysis shows that Apple user Experience Store, as a display space itself, participates in the whole process of commercial activities. It is the vanguard to convey Apple brand symbols and the link to create the signifying symbols. Therefore, the overall design of the space and the configuration between the elements are essential for the mobilization of the senses and interests of consumers.

4.1 Design Concept

The brand with distinct personality is the core of the whole enterprise, so the presentation of the design has an obvious dominant role. Apple brand highlights the unification and standardization of its operation. It strictly controls the details of its space design, the way of commodity display, materials, colors, etc., so as to show the style of the brand in a unified and distinct image. Therefore, the design scheme of the author continues the style of Apple User Experience Store.

An excellent experience store should not only conform to the popular trend of the social environment, but also design carefully in the brand information transmission and practical functions, so as to achieve the needs of consumers and guide the trend of consumers as far as possible. Various forms of elements should be reasonably used to create a unified image of the brand in every detail, and consumers should not miss any small perception opportunities. At present, the existing experience stores on the market do not provide most customers with comfortable experience. Customers can only stand to try out the products, and the advertising display area of the brand is not enough, and there is a lack of some corresponding guidelines.

4.2 Layout Chart

The appearance of the user experience store is crucial to the entire exhibition space, which directly determines whether customers will be attracted and impressed. A good look will attract customers into the store and start their creative Apple experience.

Therefore, the author's scheme also uses the structure of the cube, which is consistent with the previous practice. At the same time, the table display has been retained. These are the original symbols of the Apple Experience Store. As for the floor plan, the aesthetic feeling of composition is taken into account, with a clear primary and secondary distinction in sparsity and density. The degree of privacy also varies, and the deeper into the building, the more gaps there are to ensure a comfortable experience for individuals and to better convey the Apple symbol. (See "Figure 3")
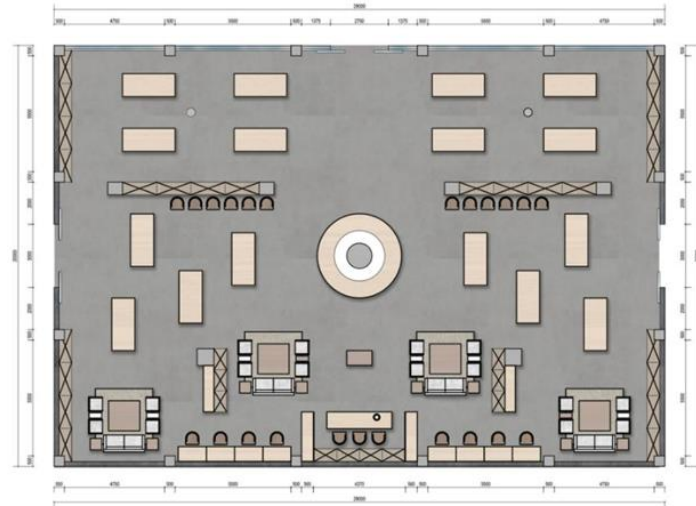

Figure 3 floor plan: designed by the author.

The entire space is centered around a central LED display area, which scrolls through Apple's ads. Due to the large footprint, three entrances are designed to distribute traffic. The biggest highlight of this design is the setting of VIP experience room, which meets the needs of some customers with large orders or special needs. Specialized escort to solve problems can greatly improve the success rate of the transaction. (See "Figure 4")
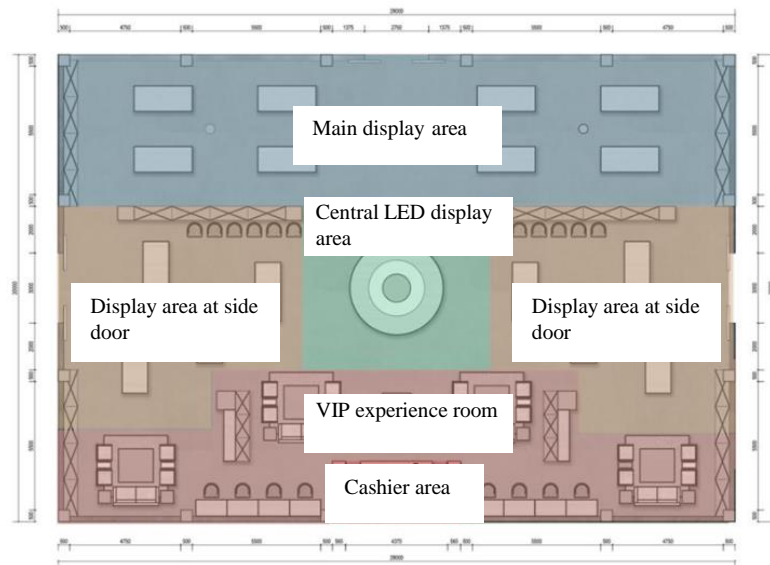
Figure 4 Functional partition source: designed by the author.

As for the experience line of the crowd, the central area is constructed and its shape is obviously different from that of other surrounding areas to attract people's attention. As a result, this section occupies the largest space. People entering from the main entrance can reach it directly, while people entering from the side entrance need to make a detour, which also helps to reduce the over-density of the flow.

The flow of people in the experience area is relatively frequent, while the sofa and cashier area are relatively quiet, which is more suitable for special consumers to consult and pay. (See "Figure 5")
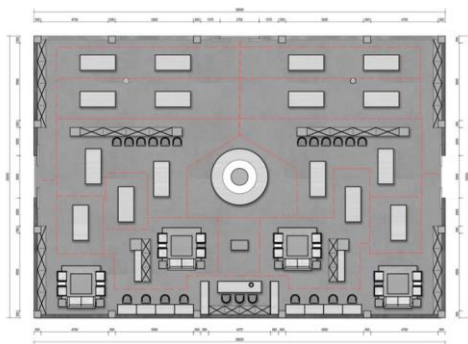

Figure 5 Dynamic road diagram Source: Designed by the author

4.3 Analysis of Renderings

The large glass curtain wall and transparent staircase are the unique elements of the Apple Experience Store, and the experience stores in different countries will be changed according to local cultural characteristics. The design of Apple Experience Store fully embodies the brand concept of pioneer and fashion, and plays an important role in the promotion of Apple's brand symbol. [8] The expression of spatial form needs to comprehensively consider the functional requirements and spiritual feelings of the space, that is, to unify the requirements of commodity display and brand culture concept, so that the space is practical and can create different spatial artistic conception according to different ideas.

When customers enter the Apple Experience Store, they see that the spatial design, color selection, lighting combination, material shape and material matching are all consistent with the original impression of the brand in their mind, and their favorable impression and desire to further understand the products of the brand will be stimulated. At this time, the appropriate participation of the salesperson is helpful to solve the possible difficulties in the cognitive process, so that customers can better move in the space. (See "Figure 6")

Figure 6 Renderings of the exterior of the building Source: Designed by the author.

The design elements of the previous experience store are retained in the design. The lights are as bright as possible and the floor height is higher to create an atmosphere of avant-garde. The colorless system is matched with the color of the log, which is the main color and has been the intention of the apple symbol. Cylindrical LED screens are used as visual focal points throughout the space.(see "Figure 7")

Figure 7 Renderings of the main entrance. Source: Designed by the author.

Two rows of display cabinets can be set up to form a natural partition to avoid the whole space being in full view. This part is also the most neatly arranged part in the whole space. (See "Figure 8") At present, the experience store on the market is presented in this way, which is the memory of the Apple brand symbol. The design of the author inherits this communication mode in order to arouse consumers' signified impression of the experience store.
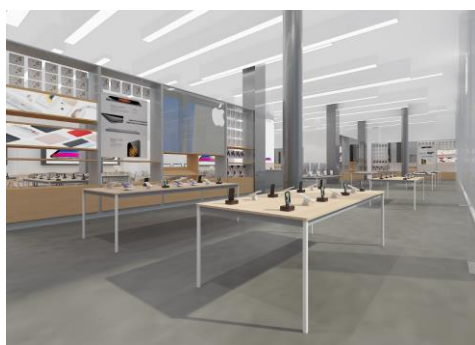

Figure 8 Renderings of the main display area Source: Designed by the author.

Previous experience stores did not have such a sofa chair, due to the type of people the designer may have taken into account. Setting up such a location can make users who are not themselves interested use it as a place to rest. However, with the improvement of living standards, this phenomenon can be avoided. Experience stores are generally set in some high-end business districts and have already screened most

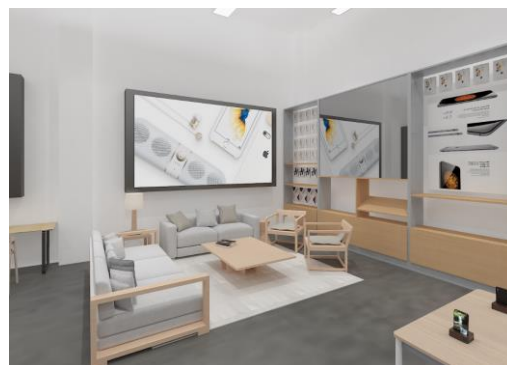people, while special customers with a large number of orders should get better service.(see "Figure 9")

Figure 9 Renderings of VIP Experience Area. Source: Designed by the author.

5. INTERPRETATION OF THE DISPLAY SYMBOLS IN THE APPLE EXPERIENCE STORE

Display design is a comprehensive design of display space, environment, props, lighting, product display and various information media for the purpose of realizing a certain function, so as to create a place for communication. [9] An exhibition includes not only visual communication design, but also the participation and coordination of various designs. As a member of display design, the coordination between display content and display space is the primary consideration of Apple Experience Store.(see "Figure 10")

Figure 10   Renderings of the side door display area. Source: Designed by the author.

5.1 Identification

Apple Experience Stores are filled with products, ads, and signs. In the whole process of creation, Apple Experience Store utilizes product factors and environmental factors of Apple brand symbol to facilitate the design, and makes reasonable use of

people's psychological state, emotional factors and human-computer interaction to enable them to receive the brand information. The design of Apple Experience Store is not only artistic, but also in line with the principles of display. The symbolization process of Apple Experience Store enables the audience to better accept the more comprehensive information of Apple products.

Apple experience stores all over the world have a common display symbol, which is elucidated from the brand symbol, such as color, lighting, material, etc. As a communication medium, display symbol has the characteristics of easy dissemination and understanding, which puts forward higher requirements for the identification of symbol form. The experience store itself is a place where material attributes are transformed into emotional attributes, reflecting the cultural characteristics and humanistic values of symbols. [10] Through the flexible application and analytical construction of Apple's symbol system, designers guide the arrangement and combination of various exhibits, harmonize the relationship between elements, environment and audience, so as to meet the creative and anticipated ideas of designers.

5.2 Balance

Modern semiotics summarizes a large number of symbols in human society, forms the transmission symbols with high efficiency and aesthetic value, and applies them in display design. How to balance the relationship between exhibits and space is an important issue to be considered in exhibition space.

To explain Apple Experience Store from the perspective of semiotics, on the one hand, can show the materiality of Apple Experience Store; on the other hand, it can reveal the spirituality of Apple Experience Store and express the arbitrariness of space. These symbols are generated based on the development of Apple brand and under the fragmentation and reorganization among products, enterprises, advertising and marketing, which has a strong arbitrariness. The balance between them is demonstrated through practice.

Therefore, the exhibition space is not only the representation design of symbols. It is more important to convey meaning through symbols, to convey deeper connotations, and to form a balance between the space and the brand itself.

5.3 Experience

The design enables the visitors to naturally integrate into the exhibition space, participate in the experience, and achieve a good display effect.

A large part of the reason why the popularity of Apple products can be sustained comes from its innovation of spatial experience. The Apple Experience Store has successfully solved the problems of using related products, collecting bugs, and collecting ideas and opinions. In the meantime, Apple's software engineers are busy working on new software that users can download and use as soon as possible. This has given Apple a rapid rise in customer loyalty, a deliberate idea that is rare inside and outside China. [11]

Apple Experience Stores are very clear about the importance of deepening customers' recognition of Apple symbols, and the factors that affect their recognition of Apple brand include both objective factors of the space itself and subjective factors of consumers. Objective factors include product uniqueness, spatial layout and atmosphere creation, brand sales staff behavior; while subjective factors include three dimensions: need, experience and characteristics. The objective aspect is under Apple's control. Apple products, through mass media and word-of mouth spread by consumers, have created a preconceived impression in the minds of the majority of consumers — fashionable, avant-garde, high-end, and expensive.

6. CONCLUSION

Baudrillard believes that the essential characteristic of consumption is not the consumption of goods, but the consumption of symbols. [12] As a carrier of symbol transmission, exhibition space needs to show the inner spirit of the enterprise and better attract consumers. In today's era of high consumption, consumers pay less attention to the satisfaction of their physiological needs than to the satisfaction of their psychological needs. The semiotics interpretation of the display design of Apple Experience Store presents a good image of display design, which is worthy of reference for future design. In terms of image, display space can highlight specific brand culture by changing its physical structure. In terms of image, it can combine spatially related attributes with brand symbols, so that consumers can have some symbolic awareness, and form an inherent impression in consciousness, and strengthen the signified of symbols. The display design of semiotics helps to achieve the signified

renewal of brand and space, brand and product, brand and emotion.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Jiawei Mao.

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