

New Ideas for the Development of Handmade Leather Goods Based on Experience Economy

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ABSTRACT

Under the perfect supply system and extensive sales channels, the industrialized production mode of leather products has occupied most of the leather goods market due to its advantages of low cost and high production capacity. The survival and inheritance of traditional handmade leather goods has become increasingly difficult. Based on the analysis of modern leather production and the handmade leather goods market, this paper combines the experience economy with the production of handmade leather goods, and proposes a new idea for the development of handmade leather goods based on the experience economy. This idea is based on the experience and feeling of consumers, so that consumers can become designers, participants, evaluators and users of products according to their needs, which gives full play to the advantages of personalized customization of handmade leather goods, has certain market competitiveness, is a new feasible direction for the development of handmade leather goods in the future, and provides strong support for the inheritance of handmade leather goods production.

Keywords: *Experience economy, Handmade leather goods, Cultural heritage.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The source of handmade leather goods can be traced back to the primitive age when people lived the life of a savage. With the rise and fall of human civilization to this day [1], from animal clothing to armour, from leather clothing to leather boots, it not only witnesses weapons and army horses and dynasties' alternation, but also witnesses marketplaces and alleys and life of people. It can be said that as a symbol of Chinese civilization, handmade leather goods carry the cultural memory of the Chinese descendants. However, with the wave of industrialization sweeping the world, industrialized leather products quickly occupied the leather goods market with their advantages of high production capacity and low cost, which caused a strong impact on the traditional handmade leather goods manufacturing industry [2]. Today in the 21st century, industrialized leather products occupy the vast majority of the leather goods market due to the socially sound raw material supply system and diverse sales channels. Handmade leather goods manufacturing and cultural heritage are on the hazard. How to find a place in the handmade

leather goods industry in the current market is extremely urgent.

The experience economy points out a new direction for the handmade leather goods manufacturing industry. The experience economy is a new economic form in which commodities that were originally main body of consumption becomes a carrier of consumption, and the feelings that consumers gain during the experience play a major role in capital exchange. The handmade leather goods industry under the experience economy allows consumers to participate in the leather design, pattern-making and production process, helping consumers become the leader of the products they need [3], and experience the cultural heritage and civilized connotations of handmade leather goods. Obviously, industrialized leather products can't provide consumers with this diverse consumption experience.

In the experience economy, consumers' purchasing purposes are transitioning from unicity to complexity. Consumers are no longer satisfied with the basic use functions of commodities, but give more expectations and value to commodities,

and pay more attention to the sense of product design and the experience of the purchase process. This is in line with the rich cultural connotation of handmade leather goods and the changeable customization of individual character, and points out a new direction for the development of handmade leather goods in the future.

2. SOURCES AND BRIEF ANALYSIS OF EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

2.1 Sources of Experience Economy

In 1970, Alvin Toffler first proposed the experience economy in "Future Shock", and regarded it as the next stage of industrial economic development after industrial economy and service economy. Since then, the book "The Experience Society" published by German sociologist Gerhard Schulze in 1995 has triggered a lot of discussions about the experience economy. Experience economy is regarded as a new economic model after agricultural economy, industrial economy, and service economy. In the experience economy model, consumers are the main body of consumption and commodities are used as consumption tools. By providing personalized products and services, companies can provide users with or create certain feelings or experiences for users to obtain economic benefits. In other words, in the experience economy model, what consumers consume is not a commodity but a kind of "experience", and what is satisfied is no longer just a material need but a spiritual need.

Due to the strong subjective color of the term "experience", the economic value of "experience" seems difficult to measure. In fact, "what experience is" has been a long-term topic in philosophical circles. Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Bergson, and Freud have all made incisive discussion on "experience". In general, "experience" refers to the deep inner feeling that a person obtains from experience beyond the event itself. In other words, although experience is accompanied by a strong subjective color, the experience itself is a transcendent spiritual feeling, which actually points to a meaningful result. Therefore, the economic value of "experience" corresponds to people's spiritual needs, that is, the experience economy represents people's subjective self-realization needs.

2.2 Analysis of Characteristics of Experience economy

2.2.1 Experience

The experience economy focuses on human experience. Consumers produce unique experiences through personal participation in the production process. This process is irreplaceable and has strong subjective feelings. Throughout the consumption process, consumers enter a unique immersive experience through multiple senses. This is the most important and basic experience of the experience economy.

Consumers assign their own emotions and thoughts to real actions during the consumption process, which are more realistic than verbal interactions. Merchants can get information feedback during their actions, adjust service strategies, and work with consumers to improve product design, forming a virtuous circle. In this process, consumers have always been in an active position, rather than passive. Each link of the consumption process is carefully designed by the merchants, from the perspective of consumers to explain and provide services, so that consumers can get a complete experience and unique feelings [4].

Consumers' participation in the process is more of an emotional desire, or this type of product can resonate with self-psychological needs in some aspects [5]. Affectivity is when consumers have an unforgettable experience in the process of participating, and during this period of time they have paid true feelings to identify and emotionally rely on the product, put forward ideas on the design, adjust according to their needs, carefully craft their own work, customize their own products, and finally, form the loyalty to the product.

2.2.2 Economy

Experience economy is the product of economic and social development to a certain height. Merchants don't directly obtain profits, but make adjustments according to the characteristics of consumers. Detailed and specific research has been carried out from product design and development, sales process, sales results and after-sales service. In the past, consumers only need to buy goods directly, and the psychological activities they perform are nothing more than whether the goods are worthwhile, suitable and durable. The entire transaction process is short. And the experience economy requires merchants to carry out targeted

strategies. The process is consumer-oriented. The designer of the actual product can monitor the dynamics of consumers throughout the process and obtain comprehensive and true information at the first time. The information will be transformed into a driving force for economic returns. After spending time and effort, consumers think that they are getting value for money and are more able to accept the higher prices of handmade leather goods.

From a long-term perspective, the economic benefits it produces are developmental and consistent. In the experience economy, the perception that consumers get will not end with the delivery of the product, and their true experience of participating in the process will not disappear immediately. This continuous experience enables consumers to sort out the impressive places in subsequent memories, re-evaluate and define them. The touch of any one detail can make consumer produce new feeling [5]. Once a relationship with special factors is established between the consumer and the product, it will form dependence on the product and cultivate loyalty to the product. With this emotional dependence in the buying and selling relationship, the repurchase rate will be increased, and the merchant can obtain more economic and emotional returns [6].

3. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTION OF HANDMADE LEATHER GOODS BASED ON EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

3.1 Current Situation of Leather Goods Consumer Market

At the present stage, industrial leather products occupy the absolute mainstream in the leather consumer market. The reason for this phenomenon is that the perfect raw material supply system in modern society makes the cost of industrial production extremely low and increases the profit margin of leather products. Secondly, enterprises can sell products to large-scale people through mass standardized production and through a variety of distribution channels, so that sales have a minimum guarantee. Coupled with the perfect consumer market system in modern society and the increasing consumption level of the people, the scale of industrial leather products continues to expand, occupying most of the leather goods market. However, the disadvantages of industrial leather products are their single product styles, lack of

individuality, and lack of competitiveness in the field of high-end customization.

Compared with industrial leather products, the manufacturing cost of handmade leather goods is higher. First of all, handmade leather goods are mainly manufactured in small workshops or individual studios, and don't have a complete upstream supply chain. The cost of raw materials purchased through suppliers is much higher than that of industrial enterprises. Secondly, the handmade leather goods manufacturing industry lacks a supporting market sales system and publicity methods. The key is that the manual leather goods production process is cumbersome, the time cost is high, and the gap is too large compared with industrial production capacity. At present, the consumption objects of handmade leather products are mainly for the lovers of handmade leather products. This group focuses on the cultural symbols inherited from the leather goods, the craftsmanship of the leather products, or the purchase of products from a purely aesthetic point of view. That is to say, the cultural attributes and humanistic feelings of handmade leather goods have comparative advantages compared with industrial leather products.

At this stage, China's experience economy continues to develop, and the consumption structure is gradually changing. People's consumption is gradually changing from a functional survival-oriented consumption to a service-oriented and development-oriented consumption, showing diversified consumption characteristics. This change in consumption structure reflects the profound changes in the people's own needs, that is, the needs of self-development and self-realization. People gradually realize that consumption is a process, and begin to hope to feel participation, creativity and experience in the consumption process. For industrial leather products, this demand of consumers is obviously unsatisfactory, while for the handmade leather goods industry, it can give full play to its comparative advantages and satisfy consumers' self-realization needs.

3.2 Feasibility Analysis of Experiential Handmade Leather Goods Industry

The consumption field in China has gradually shifted from functional consumption to service-oriented consumption, and the concept of consumption has shifted from meeting daily needs to personalized experience, which has led to the rapid development of the service industry and has

become the main driving force for consumption upgrades [7]. The experiential handmade leather goods aims to provide consumers with customized services. By allowing customers to make handmade leather products by themselves, they can achieve their self-realization needs in the production process.

3.2.1 Leather Dyeing

Color senses are the psychological feelings that people produce after the retina and brain processing through the color observation of the product [8]. Color can convey a variety of signals to attract consumers, and consumers can also express their mood through color. Therefore, merchants can launch hand-made leather dyeing projects in experiential hand-made leather goods. One is to allow consumers to color according to their own preferences. The other is that, if customers create excellent color matching designs and color matching ideas, merchants can learn from them and save development costs. The so-called manual leather dyeing refers to the use of basic dyes, alcohol dyes, acrylic dyes, etc. to color the leather surface. After manual dyeing, the touch of the leather will not change, and the color can be freely adjusted between the shades and various color changes. According to the different raw materials of vegetable tanned leather and the different wiping methods, the dyeing effect of manual dyeing is uncertain, unique and diverse. Consumers have different hobbies, and the products they design are different. Merchants use this as a starting point to provide consumers with dyeing raw materials, so that consumers can freely perform unknown creations, thereby obtaining challenges and surprises ("Figure 1").



Figure 1 Dyeing of leather products by different consumers.

3.2.2 Feelings

Handicraft culture is neither opposed to industrial civilization, nor is it going back to the traditional and backward farming era, but the improvement of human values, and the performance of pursuing the harmonious

development of spirit and material [9]. This model of handmade leather goods experience store allows consumers to participate in the selection of raw materials and the production of products from beginning to end, and become designers, creators and users of product life. In this process, consumers have paid sincerity and poured real emotions [10]. Therefore, merchants can use the empathy of consumers to design products that can impress them and let them participate in the creation. On the one hand, merchants can attach objects of significance and sentiment to consumers in certain positions of leather goods, such as their childhood clothes, or some commemorative items ("Figure 2"). On the other hand, handmade leather goods are made of vegetable tanned leather. The characteristic of this leather is that it can form its own traces of life in the course of use according to the individual's usage and living habits. It is commonly known as "raising cattle" (such as "Figure 3"), attracting more consumers with special emotions and feelings.



Figure 2 Customized leather products in fabrics provided by consumers.



Figure 3 Discoloration effect of vegetable tanned leather.

3.2.3 Leather Reprocessing

Traditional handmade leather products are mostly luggage and bags, mainly for the needs of production and life, while the consumer groups who are mainly facing handmade leather products under the experience economy put forward certain

requirements for the ornamental of leather products. In order to cater to the aesthetic needs of consumers, handmade leather goods processing should be innovative in form, breaking through traditional cognition and opening up new design fields. The main methods include but are not limited to the reprocessing of leather to increase the artistic appreciation of handmade leather goods. The leather surface of vegetable tanned leather has a certain degree of extensibility. Using printing tools for carving creation on the leather surface can create a very beautiful leather carving pattern ("Figure 4"). In addition, merchants can also learn from the art form of painting creation, and display different artistic content on the leather surface according to the latest fashion trends and cultural elements. With the texture of the leather itself, this way of expression gives people a sense of third dimension and layering ("Figure 5").



Figure 4 Innovative leather works.



Figure 5 Innovative leather works.

4. INHERITANCE OF HANDMADE LEATHER CRAFTSMANSHIP

4.1 Civilized Connotation

From the first time human beings walked upright, to looking at the vast stars of the universe, human beings rely on all things to fight against nature and coexist in harmony with the earth. Handmade leather goods are witnesses of this great journey. From the time when the flame was passed

down, primitive leather jackets helped ancestors resist the severe cold; then when the dynasty established and the various states or nations disputed, the leather boots and battle armor witnessed the rise of weapons and the rise and fall of the world; even afterwards, the brocade hat and sable fur became a symbol of power and nobility, and leather goods also flowed into daily department stores and ordinary streets; until now, more and more leather products are designed and produced to decorate every corner of people's daily life. While the wave of industrialization brought people ample material life, it also washed away many of people's cultural memories. Although people are standing in a prosperous era, every time they look back, they can always see leather goods accompanied by human civilization for thousands of years in the smoke and dust of history, witnessing ups and downs of time, as well as the rise and fall of history. In the past dynasties of Chinese civilization, they have condensed into distinct cultural symbols and spiritual symbols. The craftsmanship of handmade leather goods has been passed down for thousands of years and is one of the precious cultural treasures of Chinese civilization. It can be said that the development of handmade leather goods reflects the evolution of civilization, and the craftsmanship of leather goods reflects the progress of society, which is the embodiment of the artistic crystallization of the ancient working people.

4.2 Inheritance and Innovation

As Marx said: "Men make their own histories, but they do not make them at will, they do not make them under conditions of their own choosing, but under conditions which they meet directly, which are fixed, which are inherited from the past." In other words, from the day when the handmade leather craftsmanship came into being, it has been developing in a continuous historical track. With the emergence and development of human beings, the craftsmanship of handmade leather goods has developed step by step to today. Under the combined effect of many factors, the improvement of its craftsmanship has experienced a development process from simple to complex, from crude to delicate, and from single to multiple. The art of handmade leather goods has gone through a long process of development, but one of the fundamental reasons for its ability to maintain development is the development of social economy. The inheritance of handmade leather craftsmanship is the duty-bound responsibility of later generations,

but it is definitely not only relying on the passion of leather craftsmen to be passed on unflinchingly. In the process of inheriting and innovating handmade leather craftsmanship, it is necessary to follow the trend of history and conform to the law of economic development. And combining the development of handmade leather goods with the experience economy is a due change in the new era and a new direction for the development of handmade leather goods in the future. With the carrier of experience economy, the culture of handmade leather goods can be carried forward.

Inheritance and innovation can't be ignored in the development of things. In the process of continuous development of handmade leather craftsmanship, people should explore and inherit its cultural heritage and civilized connotation, and innovate its content and form to make it meet the needs of contemporary social economic development and aesthetics.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper first briefly describes the market dilemma that the handmade leather goods manufacturing industry has encountered in the face of industrialized leather companies, and points out the market trend of changing the consumption structure to a service-oriented experience. By introducing the experience economy and its theoretical core, it proposes a new idea for the development of handmade leather goods based on the experience economy and briefly analyzes the idea. Handmade leather goods are representative of the inheritance of Chinese civilization, and their existence is related to the painstaking efforts of the people of all generations. Handmade leather goods under the experience economy are new ideas and new methods proposed in accordance with the progress of the times and market development, which can give full play to the cultural advantages of handcrafted leather goods, protect the heritage of civilization, and provide the people with diverse consumer experiences.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Defeng Song is responsible for revising and editing the paper, and Lixue Zhao wrote the paper.

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