



# Research on the Redesign of City Brand Identity in Chongqing

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**Abstract.** City branding is increasingly becoming a favourable tool for city promotion and communication. In today's rapidly developing cities, it is not only a tool to attract visitors and investors, but also a tool to deepen city services and enhance city reputation and satisfaction. This paper summarizes the key elements and design methods of city brand design by analyzing the current excellent cases and trends of city branding. It is also practiced and verified through the redesign of *Chongqing* city brand identity. It provides a reference way and accumulation of experience for the city brand identity design to adapt to the scenario application in the new era and the new strategy of city brand development.

**Keywords:** City Brand · Chongqing · Brand Strategy · Brand Identity

## 1 Introduction

In the current era, sustainable development and competition are not only between commercial brands, but also between regions and regions, and between cities. Every place hopes to attract more visitors from different places. Therefore, city brand is more and more widely recognized and valued. Since 1970s, a pro bono project by Milton Glaser illustrates the symbols of New York City has become an icon and successfully promote. The role of brands is obvious. In the era of full information exchange and sharing, experiential marketing, online and offline interactive marketing model, which is widely used in marketing, may provide a feasible reference for today's city brand marketing. Based on this model and interaction, the urban brand image design should be considered from design preparation stage and the creative design stage.

Such City branding is a form of existence based on easier communication and better communication and feedback with the audience. It is a way to better communicate with the audience through a visual approach. It can generate better closeness and goodwill with customer groups, and for city branding, such attributes also help to enhance the brand image of the whole city. Drawing on the feasibility of experiential marketing approaches, city brands can interact with their audiences, local residents or visitors through various online and offline activities. Perhaps this will be an important attribute of city branding in the future.

*Chongqing*, the most dynamic central city in Southwest of China, the only municipality directly under the central government in Southwest of China, is the largest city

in China also. With the needs of economic development and urban development, the city with the largest number of visitors in China in 2019 (according to Shanghai Interface News report "List of China's tourism cities in 2019") ushered in good development opportunities. At the same time, it also needs a strong city brand image to solidify and promote the development of the city. As a designer, whom is born and living in this city hopes could help promoting city brand and good reputation by design the city identity. Therefore, a sustainable and future oriented urban brand visual identity design has become an important jigsaw and marketing means to complete urban development. Through the design of visual identity of Chongqing city brand, it not only meets the needs of Chongqing city brand development, but also practices the design method of city brand.

Objectives:

(1) Summarize the design strategy and trend of city brand identity through literature method and case analysis method.

(2) Summarize the key elements of city brand design from the methods and Strategies of marketing, so as to learn from and guide the visual identification design of city brand.

(3) Practice the visual identity design of *Chongqing* city brand.

## 2 Study on City Branding

### 2.1 The Development Road of City Brand: From City Image to City Brand

The tide of industrial revolution has promoted the rapid development of urban construction. People begin to think deeply and study the entity of city. They put forward "city image" in the pursuit of urban beauty, and put forward the concept of "city brand" in the process of managing city image [5]. The rudiment of the city image can be traced back to the "city beautification movement", which focuses on the decoration and beautification of the city, and the beauty of the architectural environment to highlight the image of the city. With the maturity and wide application of CIS corporate image theory in the 1980s, CIS Theory has been combined with urban beautification and image construction to think more systematically and comprehensively about city image. Then, with the rise of brand concept in commercial activities, the excessive development from image to brand also extended to the city content, and the activities of building city brand gradually rose all over the world. And what is a brand? AMA (American Marketing Association) defines Brand as: A name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors. Under the scope of city brand, it can be understood that the city is a broader product or service, while the sales activity itself can be understood as a more extensive process of communication and interaction. The difference between city brand and commodity brand is that the benefits of the city are longer and the service and sociality are stronger. Relatively speaking, the short-term business interests are weaker.

City branding is an obvious trend because of global competition, and a topic of significant interest to both academics and policy makers. The competition between cities to establish their credentials as the best choice for prospective visitors, investors, business, students, and talented people will intensify [2]. The competition between cities

extends from the competition of resources and the competition of talents to attracting all kinds of resources and gaining good reputation through brand method. The development of the city is not only to attract investment, tourists and various resources, but also to attract talents, living environment and reputation competition. Attracting more attention and having a good reputation has become a powerful driving force for the sustainable development of cities. The theory and function of city brand just provides an effective mechanism for this. Kevin Lane Keller, a famous brand researcher, "a city can be branded", believes that the history of the power of city branding allows people to know and understand a certain region, and to practice a certain image and association with the existence of the city, so as to integrate its spirit into the city.

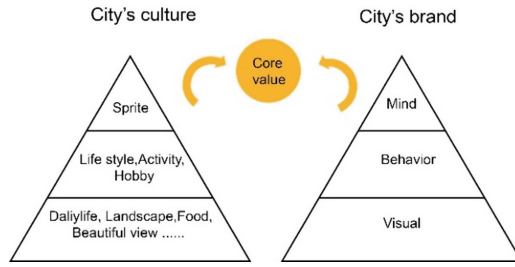
## 2.2 Case Study

For example, we all know I love (heart) New York City by Milton Glaser, which is the logo of a public welfare project initiated by designers. Simple as it is, it has succeeded in arousing people's feelings for all aspects of the city and benefiting the city and the state. Although it is the primary stage of city brand, its pioneering role is obvious. Today's city brands are more systematic. Like Melbourne, By Landor Sydney company in 2009 (which company design the visual identity Melbourne), they says that "When you brand a destination, the design must be an open system that is constantly changing and is composed of players that don't necessarily recognize their place in the mix, much less want to give input or take direction." Based on this thinking and the complexity of the city itself, the city brand which expresses the diversity of Melbourne as its core significance is presented to the world. Moreover, the city government of Melbourne integrates the city brand culture and core value through municipal management, making the city brand of Melbourne run through the whole city operation, strengthening and playing a good role of brand management, which is worth learning and thinking. Brand is a systematic project, which is a long-term and continuous work. It is the management deeply cultivated in the daily life, and it is the culture that is branded into the daily life.

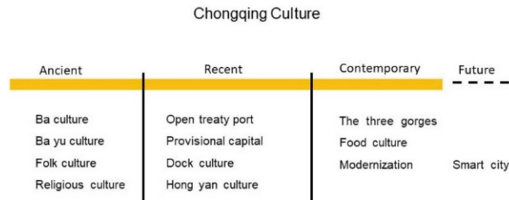
From the above cases we can see a trend that city branding tends to be more of an open and systematic approach. Using modern branding concepts and marketing tools, from a single identity to a platform and marketing tools and instruments, the brand identity is a tool to serve the city promotion strategy behind it. Therefore, the design of brand identity has a more open systemic nature and extensibility to adapt to the development of marketing in the new era.

## 2.3 Summary Method

How to build a city brand is a systematic project. Through the branding approach, the previous case study we can get a transmission process from city culture to city branding, the basis of city branding is city culture. Through the branding method, the values of the city are exported to facilitate systematic communication and people's recognition and reputation. Then the entity from the spirit to the behavior to the view is three different dimensions but all serve the basic of cultural branding. Therefore, the perception of city culture to the communication and identification of the city brand is linked through the core values (as shown in the Fig. 1). Drawing on the mature model



**Fig. 1.** Model of City culture to City brand.



**Fig. 2.** Cultural and historical context of Chongqing.

of CIS corporate image system theory, it can be divided into three main systems for city branding: a spiritual identification system with city culture, spirit and values, and a behavior identification system formed by human behavior. The third is the city visual image system. The perception of urban culture can be analyzed and summarized from three aspects. First, starting from the real natural conditions of the city, including urban landscape, natural conditions, diet, climate and other characteristics. Secondly, we can find the relationship between people, people and environment, people and city from people’s lifestyle and behavior patterns; Third, we can use the residents’ beliefs, values and spiritual world to summarize the characteristics of the city. From these three levels, we can find the characteristics of the city and refine the key elements and design elements to express the commonness and uniqueness of the city’s brand identity.

### 3 About Chongqing

Starting from *Chongqing* culture (as shown in the Fig. 2), this paper analyzes and obtains the core connotation of urban culture from three aspects: city’s spirit, behavior (human behavior) and visual sense, and further identifies and designs after the competition through conceptual analysis.

Firstly, starting from the regional characteristics and urban landscape of *Chongqing*. *Chongqing* is located in the eastern edge of the Sichuan basin, where the Yangtze and Jialing rivers converge, and the hilly terrain, thus forming the reputation of the City of Landscape. These are all descriptions of the city’s geographic environment, and the characteristics of the regional climate. Of course, also because of the regional characteristics, the city’s transportation presents a variety of characteristics, monorail, ropeway, subway, more than a dozen bridges across the two rivers, the great difference between the height

of the elevated road, has been built on the hills of all kinds of buildings. All of them are characterized by the topography of the city. Therefore, *Chongqing* is a landscape city full of spatial changes, three-dimensional and multi-dimensional transportation.

Secondly, go to find the lifestyle of *Chongqing* people, the relationship between people and the city. Because of the terrain, it was very difficult for *Chongqing* to travel in the past, but at the same time, as an earlier open wharf in China, business transactions are frequent. Moreover, due to the early opening of the port, frequent foreign immigrants and exchanges, and the war of resistance against Japan, a large number of immigrants live here. It has formed the warm, hospitable and diversified quality of *Chongqing* people. The most characteristic of *Chongqing* People's eating habits is spicy hot pot, which ranks first in China. Hot pot itself is a kind of integrated food. All kinds of different ingredients can be hot pot. It is tolerance and persistence of taste. At the same time, the way of hot pot also determines that it is a favorite dining way for friends to get together. *Chongqing* People's love of hot pot also shows that *Chongqing* people like lively and enthusiastic quality from another side. Therefore, *Chongqing* people are warm, hospitable and hardworking. Have an open attitude and maintain strong regional eating habits. In the coexistence of persistence and openness.

Thirdly, to feel the spiritual world, value belief and cultural background of *Chongqing* people. *Chongqing* is a typical immigrant city. *Chongqing* People's lifestyle and cultural habits have the shadow of local integration, but at the same time, it has the regional characteristics of *Chongqing*. It can be said to be a diversified, integrated and inclusive city. *Chongqing*'s urban culture is not only influenced by the ancient Bayu culture, but also includes the wharf culture. It has a collective consciousness and helps each other. Due to the large number of immigrants during the World War II, various cultures are integrated and inclusive. During World War II, the optimistic spirit of *Chongqing* people helped them spend several years of continuous bombing and reconstruction. It is also a legendary label and cultural symbol of the whole city. Now *Chongqing* is the development direction of a municipality directly under the central government and a national central city. On the basis of maintaining the urban character and previous cultural background, the whole city is an international city with diversified development.

## 4 Logotype Design and Experiment

Brand is the sum of all tangible and intangible elements, which makes the selection unique [6]. This definition embodies the core of the brand design process. Simply put, it is about finding the most unique part of a brand from the tangible and intangible elements to express it. So identity, and uniqueness are the core of the brand. "A logotype or a symbol should express the fundamental essence of an organization or a product or a service the visual manifestation of its nature, its aspirations, its culture, its reason of being." Said by Bart Crosby (has been director of AIGA). Therefore, exploring and expressing the essence and core values of the brand is the key to brand identity. This requires research and understanding of the brand object, which is a process from surface to point, through the three processes and steps of concept analysis, element extraction and design expression to gradually refine and express the uniqueness of the brand [3].

**Table 1.** Major concept words of *Chongqing* selection.

| <i>Keywords</i>  | <i>Select</i> | <i>Rank</i> | <i>Keywords</i>  | <i>Select</i> | <i>Rank</i> |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 3Dmagic          | 16            | 2           | Ba culture       | 7             | 4           |
| Fog city         | 2             | 10          | Loyalt           | 3             | 8           |
| Bridge city      | 2             | 10          | Mala             | 2             | 10          |
| Hilly city       | 10            | 3           | Xiao mian        | 7             | 4           |
| Cyber punk       | 2             | 10          | Immigration city | 1             | 15          |
| Hot pot          | 23            | 1           | Dock culture     | 5             | 6           |
| Boat tracker     | 1             | 15          | Inclusive        | 2             | 10          |
| The three Gorges | 3             | 8           | Spicy            | 4             | 7           |

#### 4.1 Elemental Extraction

Based on the understanding and analysis of the literature method, through secondary interpretation and analysis, 16 high-frequency most representative conceptual terms were therefore selected for a second sampling questionnaire screening. Through the questionnaire of a sample of 30 containing tourists and local residents, the age group of young people from 20–50 years old is also an important group of culture as well as tourism consumption. From each of the 16 vocabularies, three of the most identified conceptual words that are representative of Chongqing were selected to tally the recovered data as follows (Table 1).

The visual elements are mainly extracted and conceived from Chongqing's characteristic architecture, daily food and transportation. The visual identity of the city is based on the analysis and extraction of abstract visual symbols, which are widely disseminated in social media. As a visual identity of a city, it is an abstract visual symbol analyzed and extracted from figurative images. Chinese characters as pictographs have abstract characteristics and also have pictorial features would also be a good way to express.

Chongqing is a city built on a mountain, the mountain is a part of the city, and the city grows in the mountain. Although the slopes and hills do not facilitate the development of the city, it is these features that give Chongqing's cityscape its layered and symbolic character. Challenges turn into opportunities, and in today's world of media and social media, the spread of social media amplifies this character. The two rivers run through high humidity and foggy winters, hence the name Fog City. Water provided the city with vitality and was also the main means of transportation in ancient times. The main areas that gave birth to Chinese civilization also developed along the two most important rivers, the Yellow River and the Yangtze River. Due to its complex topography, the city of Chongqing has many unique spatial features, such as Escher's paradoxical spaces, which are staggered and aesthetically pleasing. In this city, the transition between spaces and spatial connections is sometimes very abrupt, giving the illusion of a world apart. The distance is short, but due to the difference in height, one seems to enter another world and space. The characteristics of the urban space can be easily seen in many videos and travel videos posted on Weibo.

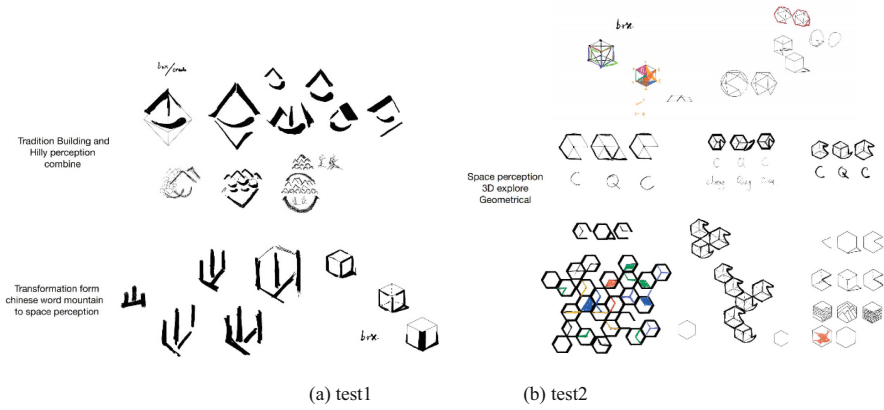


Fig. 3. Sketch.

The traditional architecture of Chongqing area is characterized by the most representative hanging foot buildings, due to the geographical conditions of the hillside, the height difference is obvious, some houses are very built on the hillside, some are even slate side, the house itself does not have enough support structure, there will be part of the support in the side wall or the difference on the hillside looks dangerous. These houses one by one, in the limited space as overlapping buildings grow organically class, in the past, the river on both sides of the hammock is very strong light, which is currently the most popular attractions of tourists in Chongqing Hongya Dong. Very regional characteristics, many works of art, including Wu Guanzhong’s paintings are represented. The hanging foot towers and this traditional architecture are very distinctive visual elements.

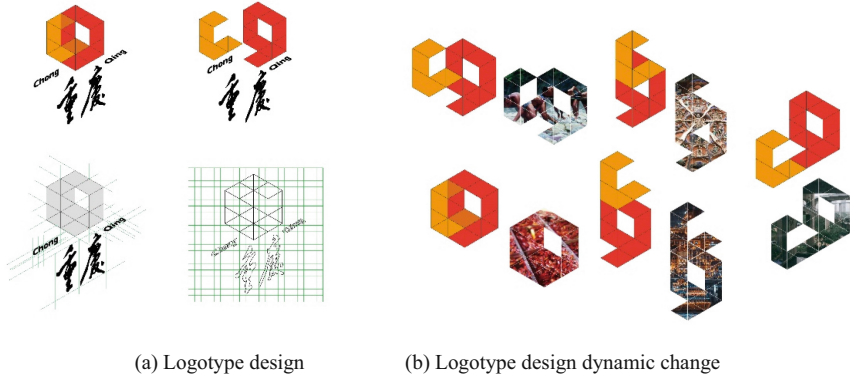
### 4.2 Design Sketch

From the above different dimensions and feature analysis, the following key points are determined to identify features and concepts for design. Visually, it shows the characteristics of mountain and water and multi-dimensional spatial transformation in Chongqing, and expresses the extensibility of unity, cooperation and sharing from the behavior characteristics. Focus on inclusiveness, openness, pluralism and core values from the perspective of abstract concepts and values.

Therefore, in the sketch (as shown in Fig. 3), from depicting the form of mountain and water to expressing the combination distortion of urban space, and let the elements have a relationship to form a united combination. To express the core concept and connotation.

### 4.3 Logotype Design

Through the of the mountain characters to the association of the three-dimensional space corner, and through the rule of perspective, the two-dimensional plane can express the three-dimensional visual effect, and this kind of visual expression of the dimensional span is also the whole city space transformation and give people the impression of multi-dimensional transformation (as shown in Fig. 4a). And through the visual color block



(a) Logotype design

(b) Logotype design dynamic change

**Fig. 4.** Logotype design.

distinction to form the abbreviation of C and Q is also the meaning of urban abbreviation. The two-dimensional patterns and three-dimensional visual effects are integrated and realized through the gradient and perspective relationship in the plane expression, which makes the dislocation visual feeling more dynamic and also provides a way and platform for dynamic design and extension (as show in Fig. 4b).

provides a way and platform for dynamic design and extension (as show in Fig. 4b). The more open and systematic design is not limited to one or two figurative forms, but rather a systematic identification and perception that better expresses the attributes of the city as a huge platform. Therefore, we can see more and more city brands are moving towards a more easily extended, dynamic, changing and systematic identity in logo design. It is also more in line with the digital and intelligent today.

## 5 Conclusion

As a 2,000-year-old ancient city and China's youngest municipality, Chongqing's interweaving of the old and the new should be future-oriented while maintaining its inherent character. The redesign of Chongqing's city brand should also meet the needs of the city's future sustainable development. Brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses, [1] but in today's world of rapid information exchange and the intermingling of various cultures, it is more difficult to represent and express the connotation of a city with one or two simple graphics due to the complexity of this medium. This consideration is reflected in the fact that the city branding strategy behind the city image is often a more diverse, malleable and possible expression. It is not limited to its current state. The city is a developing organism, the city is dynamically developed by people and their interactions with people and things, and the future image of the city is determined by time, space and people. Lack of consistency can weaken the approach of the city brand to "capture the city" [4] Therefore, the brand image should be a platform for plasticity and consistency, not a temporary image representation, but a visual language that can change and evolve. This visual language can be changed through stakeholder interaction. Cities need to be sustainable and they need to be branded, so brand strategy and visual identity also need to be synchronized, which is the meaning of the so-called open system.



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