



Research on the Social Spreadability and Market Prospects of Chinese Pop Culture

Zijie Liao^{1,*}

¹Chongqing Yucai secondary school, Chongqing, 400050, China

*Corresponding author. Email: 2405233875@qq.com

Abstract. In contemporary society, the development of pop culture is a phenomenon, cultivating a new market with considerable potential around the globe. At the same time, Chinese fashion designers are trying to incorporate the Chinese style with pop culture, showing the Chinese aesthetics. The major theme is to analyze the social spreadability and market prospects of Chinese pop culture, with the purpose to facilitate the development of Chinese pop culture. The main research methods are taking literature review and analyzing the official report, and the research significance is to promote Chinese pop culture around the globe.

Keywords: Chinese style, Chinese traditional elements, Pop culture, Fashion brand

1 Introduction

After thousands of years of precipitation, Chinese culture has unique and profound attainment in aesthetics. Silk, tea ceremony, Chinese zodiac, mythology, etc. are all famous representatives of Chinese culture. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, trendy cultures have emerged on both sides of the Pacific, started by a group of young people who responded to the call of the times and dedicated themselves to the promotion of local culture. With the avant-garde concept of "Bridging the east and the west", Hong Kong celebrity Edison Chen established CLOT in 2003, blazing a trail for Chinese trendy culture. In recent years, more and more Chinese trendy brands are using Chinese culture as their design concept, and continue to develop their potential in the domestic and international markets. The major theme is to analyze the market prospects of Chinese pop culture. Besides, what cannot be ignored is the research purposes. The rise of the Chinese style in the field of pop culture has undoubtedly won the attention of the world. As a later entrant to the pop culture, Chinese brands should adapt to contemporary fashion trends and present unique Chinese traditional elements in the flood of apparel development in an unprecedented way. First, after mastering Chinese cultural elements, Chinese brands need to skillfully combine Chinese cultural heritage and modern design methods to make clothing designs more distinct and outstanding. Secondly, Chinese pop culture brands need to learn from the marketing experience of successful Western brands to further enter the vision of global citizens.

In the paper, the main research methods are utilizing literature review and official reports. When it comes to research significance, Chinese style not only has a value at the artistic level but also has the significance of advancing the development of Chinese pop culture design.. Chinese cultural elements, which have taken thousands of years to form, are the crystallization of national wisdom and aesthetics, and are irreplaceable forms of artistic expression. In the development phase, designers need to have a thorough understanding and interpretation of Chinese culture to help them use it flexibly. With the trend of globalization, Chinese fashion cannot be decoupled from internationalization while promoting Chinese culture, and Chinese fashion brands need to be actively present in overseas markets so that consumers from different countries can experience Chinese fashion. The conclusion is that current Chinese pop culture has great potential to develop globally but still needs to keep learning from other foreign successful pop culture.

2 Chinese pop culture design

2.1 Introduction of pop culture

Pop culture is the new symbol and language of modern society, which has the ability to spread at an astonishing speed and gain the recognition of sub-culture groups quickly. However, like a tidal wave, pop culture's trends come and vanish quickly. It takes a lot of time to verify whether a pop style can develop into a fashion. When a particular pop trend receives a majority following, it will gradually develop into a fashion, which has a relatively late fading period.

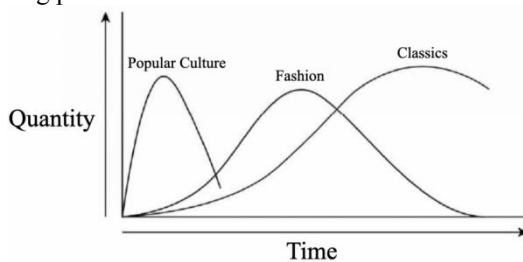


Fig. 1. The market trend of different kinds of goods [1]

Trace back to the source, the street wear is an inseparable part of pop culture. In the past, pop culture was closely related to punk, hip-hop and other styles, especially the oversize style of hip-hop clothing. Later, the some pop brand clothing has adapted a more exquisite production process. Some pop brands have even started to shift to the fashion and luxury route, such as the well-known FEAR OF GOD and OFF-WHITE, ingeniously combining pop design with luxury goods, blazing out a new way in the pop culture industry. Nowadays, the expansion of Chinese pop culture is crazier than ever.

2.2 Chinese elements in Chinese brands

2.2.1 CLOT.

CLOT was founded by the Hong Kong celebrity Edison Chen in 2003, insisting on the mission to "bridge the east and the west". In 2009, Nike collaborated with CLOT to deliver an Air Force 1 in Nike 1World Campaign[2]. It features traditional Chinese red silk and is boxed in a "candy box", a red hexagonal box used during Chinese New Year celebrations bringing luck and prosperity. However, the most unique part is the leather under the silk pattern. When customers cut or burn the silk on the surface, black leather behind it will be unveiled. Today, the price of such a pair can be \$1,000,000[3] on the online platform, showing the heat of Chinese element design in the pop culture market.



Fig. 2. CLOT × Nike Air Force 1 [2]

In 2018, CLOT collaborated with Nike to release a pair of shoes inspired by the Terracotta Warriors in China. The brand's latest footwear collaboration, the AJ 13 Low "Terracotta"[4], features a premium suede upper in brown and grey and embossed and stitched to replicate the rectangular plates found on the famous Terracotta's sheet armor. Metallic gold CLOT and Jumpman logos are applied to the tongue and heel areas to add a royal touch. Finally, the upper's hue continues on the rising sole unit and is accentuated by a translucent mid-sole and a CLOT bubble on the carbon fiber shank.



Fig. 3. CLOT × Nike Air Jordan 13 Low "Terracotta" [4]

Moreover, in 2022, taking inspiration from the Chinese culture of jade, Edison Chen and his brand CLOT designed a new pair of AJ 5 Low [5]. Satin lustrous all-black textile uppers are paired with jade beads for a harmonious look, while fiery red hues blend the coveted AJ5 color into every step. Style 'suzhou mazi' numbers on the heel (a new MJ number) and a glow in the dark outsole and side slits add style to the outfit day or night.



Fig. 4. CLOT × Nike Air Jordan 5 Low [5]

2.2.2 HEA.

In Guangdong, HEA is an old Cantonese pronunciation that means to seek and discover new things. The reason why the HEA team calls this "Southern Lion" HEA is that brand designers have a spirit of HEA. The purpose of HEA's creation is to explore and study this wonderful state of life, hoping to encourage young people to explore together through design expression, so as to show young people's determination to keep in mind the root, persevere and seek development under the influence of foreign culture. The lion dance is a traditional quintessence of Chinese culture, but it does not mean that it must be outdated and invariable. To capture the attention of the younger generation, HEA used pop culture elements and modern expression techniques to launch a slew of fashionable clothing and fun life peripheral products that were highly sought after by many young people.



Fig. 5. Southern Lion Art of HEA [6]

HEA takes this opportunity to bring the Lion Dance culture into every aspect of people's life. The designer team has also developed a series of urban-style clothes, aiming to complete the mission of inheriting the quintessence of Chinese culture. HEA collaborated with 11 cities across the country to develop "urban style" clothing. Designers extract the profound historical and cultural characteristics and brand elements of the city and combine patterns and small details on the clothing to tell the millennium story of each city.

In addition to clothing, HEA has built the Longshi Cultural and Creative Museum in Lingnan Tiandi, Foshan, which collects and exhibits hundreds of fine lion heads. Moreover, there are HEA Living Hall and Dragon Inn in different forms and commercial forms with different themes to display the dragon and lion culture in an all-round way.

Besides, since 2018, HEA has carried out cross-border activities with several brands, including "Double Happiness", Coca Cola [7], Mercedes Benz, etc., showing the real cultural integration.



Fig. 6. HEA × Coca Cola [7]

2.2.3 Li-Ning.

Li Ning Company is a leader in the Chinese sportswear and footwear industry. Its roots lie in the vision of its founder, gymnastics champion Li Ning [8]. He founded the company in 1990 with the simple intention of providing Chinese athletes with a national brand on the world stage at the Olympics - historically one of the few gateways for the West to enter true Chinese culture.

Nearly 30 years later, that simple intent has spawned the rise of a global sports pioneer that is at the forefront of 21st century design and technology, while celebrating its storied history. As such, Li-Ning explores the tensions between past and future, between man and nature, between flexibility and strength. Yet, it is ultimately driven by the human body's limitless potential.

In addition, innovation is essential to the development of the Li-Ning brand and its products. By driving timeless research and development, Li-Ning can deliver the most forward-thinking products, experiences and services while using cutting-edge technologies and materials.



Fig. 7. Inspiration from Silk Road, embroidery, Dunhuang [8]



Fig. 8. Inspiration from red-crowned crane [8]

In addition to sports, Li Ning is keenly aware of the changing global fashion landscape and streetwear, and established an elevated showroom division in 2017. Showcasing the brand's athletic heritage, advanced design capabilities and uniquely authentic Chinese perspective. This high-end product was initially sold exclusively by Chinese luxury retailers.

The sports leader's vision quickly attracted international interest. Since then, through an impressive global network of retailers ranging from prestigious department stores such as Selfridges, fashion concept stores such as LN-CC in London, Premieres in Manhattan, KITH and online platform such as SSENSE and Oki-Ni.



Fig. 9. Li-Ning tote bag in fashion show [8]



Fig. 10. Li-Ning Khaki coat for edgy streetwear [8]

2.3 Chinese elements in other brands

2.3.1 BAPE (A Bathing Ape).

BAPE (A Bathing Ape) is a Japanese fashion brand founded by Nigo in Ura-Harajuku in 1993. The brand specializes in men's, women's and children's lifestyles and street wear, running 19 stores in Japan.

With the Chinese New Year just around the corner in 2020, Bape introduces a new Chinese jacket [9]. Billed as the first camouflage brocade Chinese jacket, the traditional silhouette is updated in anticipation of Chinese New Year with a more modern outfit. Unsurprisingly, the skirt is worn in BAPE's signature green 1st Camo, while the lining is a matching olive color. The eye-catching reinterpretation also retains more traditional design cues such as the stand-up collar and snap closure.



Fig. 11. BAPE 1ST CAMO Brocade China Jacket [9]

In addition, to celebrate in a more traditional way, BAPE gave away exclusive BAPE "Red Packets" at select locations after spending approximately \$231. Instead of the classic red color, the lucky packet featured a separate pattern, with one side displaying BAPE's signature 1ST CAMO in green, while the other side wore red with a gold embossed ape head emblem. The top of the envelope has a shark face logo. The six envelopes come in a clear plastic zipper bag with a shark face on one side and the words "WGM" (World Gone Mad) on the other.9+0



Fig. 12. BAPE Red Packet Set [10]

Moreover, a BAPE Candy Box[11] was up for grabs only at BAPE Store Hong Kong. Usually brought out during Chinese New Year, the candy box features five compartments to hold various treats to celebrate the festivities.



Fig. 13. BAPE Candy Box [11]

2.3.2 Supreme.

Supreme is an American apparel and skate lifestyle brand founded in New York City in April 1994. The brand targets skateboarding and hip-hop culture, as well as youth culture. The brand produces apparel and accessories, as well as skateboards.

In 2018, Supreme's FW18 collection release caused another stir in the fashion world. One of the most eye-catching pieces this time around is the Chinese-inspired 'dragon work jacket' featuring a large embroidered dragon that wraps around the front, back and sleeves of the coat.



Fig. 14. Supreme Dragon Work Jacket [12]

3 Chinese pop culture market

3.1 Customers of Chinese pop culture brands

Philip Kotler, a famous economist, divides consumer behavior into three stages in his research on the market. The first stage is "quantity" consumption, that is, when demand

exceeds supply, people's consumption behavior is to obtain quantity satisfaction. The second is "quality" consumption. In this period, consumers no longer pursue satisfaction brought by quantity, but prefer high-quality goods. The third stage is "emotional" consumption, when the production technology of all kinds of products becomes more and more mature, people are no longer satisfied with the pursuit of quality and quantity, but choose some goods that can reflect their personality and value. In today's society, most young consumers prefer "emotional" consumption to improve their self-image. There are three main reasons why consumers are willing to purchase pop culture brands.

3.1.1 Eagerness in trying new things.

In contemporary society, people always show their curiosity and willingness to try something new, especially the clothes. Keeping trying new things allows people to figure out their styles, thus, people are willing to pay a premium for high-priced pop culture goods. Moreover, young consumers are likely to be affected by subcultural groups, blindly pursuing the novelty of the product without considering the cost performance. Therefore, products with a strong sense of design, uniqueness, and cultural elements are more likely to attract young consumers.

3.1.2 Brand loyalty.

After confirming their dressing style, people are likely to pursue certain brands for a long time to strengthen the bond between the brands' culture and their styles. In addition, some groups of people have strong emotions to support the pop culture brands in their own countries. For instance, in China, more and more Chinese people are emphasizing the importance to assist "Guochao", which refers to Chinese pop culture brands. In this circumstance, some potential customers who used to be not interested in those brands may pay attention to and even purchase them.

3.1.3 Personal image and social acceptance.

Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that some people pursue pop culture brands to strengthen their image. Due to their strong cultural and unique design elements, pop culture goods are popular among people who are eager to find out their own styles instead of following others. On the other hand, joining the consumer group of certain pop culture brands can give people the feeling of social acceptance, since they can readily find other people who are interested in the same brands and share similar personal styles with them.

3.2 Producers of Chinese pop culture brands

On the producer side, Chinese pop culture brands have to develop different strategies to attract customers.

3.2.1 Incorporating Chinese elements.

Different from the design of western pop brands, Chinese pop culture brands are good at utilizing Chinese traditional elements, such as silk, jade, dragon, etc. In this way, Chinese pop culture brands can blaze a new way out in the fierce competition in the pop industry and show their uniqueness.

3.2.2 Co-branding.

Co-branding is acknowledged to be one of the most effective ways for brands to attract potential customers and enlarge the market share since new emerging brands can amplify their influence by clinging to other brands' popularity. For instance, the collaboration between CLOT and Nike assists CLOT to find a new way to introduce Chinese aesthetics to western countries, triggering more people to purchase the products.

3.2.3 Broadening product range.

Chinese pop culture brands are striving to broaden their product range to attract different potential customers with different needs. From clothes to smartphone cases, Chinese pop culture brands are devoting themselves to incorporating their design into more production lines.

3.2.4 Hunger marketing.

With the restriction of supply, Chinese pop culture brands are capable of triggering customers to purchase their goods even though they have higher prices in the secondary market. For instance, Li-Ning's hunger marketing strategy is so effective that the prices of some sneakers are even doubled in the market.

4 Discussion

Admittedly, several problems still exist in the Chinese pop culture industry. For instance, some people are arguing that Chinese pop culture brands do not change their design elements for several years but set their products at high prices. In addition, some Chinese cultural brands are merely striving to acquire customers by emphasizing national emotions. In this circumstance, some Chinese pop culture brands may be obsolete in the future due to the lack of innovation and precipitation of brand culture base.

Merely using national emotion to attract customers is not a permanent solution. In order to have a promising future, Chinese pop culture brands should improve their design technics by actively learning from other industry-leading brands in foreign countries in their fashion design and brand culture cultivation. Cross-cultural design is an ideal solution to deal with the problem, and collaboration projects between different brands should be encouraged.

5 Conclusion

In a detailed analysis of Chinese pop culture and its market situation, Chinese pop culture shows its role in society and its potential in the market. Tons of Chinese pop culture brands are springing up all over the world, each displaying Chinese aesthetics in their own distinct way. At the same time, some shortcomings of the current Chinese pop culture emerge and are waiting to be solved in the future. Since the paper does not incorporate first-hand information, it can be improved by using questionnaires and interviews to gather specific data. In a nutshell, the Chinese pop culture's future development is becoming more and more promising.

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