



# The Strategy Research of IP Image Design Based on Visual Context—Take “POP MART” as an Example

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**Abstract.** Objective: This paper takes POP MART as an example to explore the specific design strategy of IP image design in the visual context from the perspective of visual design. Method: Based on the analysis of pop mart’s visual form and the basic principles of IP image design, this paper analyzes pop Mart from three aspects: instinct level, behavior level and reflection level. Results: Summarizes several design strategies and methods for reference in the visual form, functionality and extensibility of IP image, as well as the construction of emotional experience. Conclusion: The IP image design method based on visual context is applied in IP role design, which further clarifies the development direction of IP image in visual design and provides a certain reference value.

**Keywords:** IP image design · Visual performance · POP MART · Emotional experience · design psychology

## 1 Introduction

Traditional logo design is usually used as the representative visual symbols of enterprises or brands. Logo design extracts visual elements from the main body and summarizes symbols that conform to the aesthetic and practical functions. However, these logo designs do not fully conform to the speed of update of technology and audience recognition. Brands are eager to call for a visual symbol with personalized characteristics and vitality. Compared with star spokesmen, a virtual cartoon IP image with personality characteristics and meet the aesthetic needs of the public has the advantages of controllability, sustainability, easy updating and low cost [1]. However, at present, the IP image design on the market has many problems, such as uneven quality, fuzzy role positioning and limited image design style, and so on. Few successful IP images can be used as sustainable development. This paper takes the most popular MOLLY series of “POP MART” as an example to analyze its visual form and styling language. From the perspective of visual design, this paper explores the feasibility design strategies for building a viable personalized IP image.

## 2 The Concept of IP Image Design

IP (Intellectual Property), also known as intellectual property, is the exclusive right of intellectual labor achievements created by humans in social practice [2]. The term IP has become a hot topic in current society in recent years, sparking a “IP popular trends” in various industries. The 2018 China Cultural IP Industry Development Report points out that in the contemporary context, IP mainly refers to the integration of a link between culture and products. This type of “Cultural IP” has the characteristics of being fun and interesting, having distinct personalities, high recognition, and having an attitude and values. Cultural IP is no longer limited to traditional literature, anime, film and television works, but rather jumps out and uses character image construction as the core force to design images with distinct personality characteristics, constantly shaping the character’s personality, gathering a large number of fans in interesting external forms and high-quality original content, forming traffic. By creating rich and flexible derivatives with flexible scalability, we can increase fan stickiness, enhance sales value, and achieve the goal of nurturing the original cultural IP. IP image design refers to the external visual language expression of IP characters. From a visual perspective, an IP image with novel design, unique shape, exquisite details, and aesthetic and emotional cohesion can provide the audience with a good aesthetic experience on the sensory level, thereby stimulating purchasing interest. Only such IP roles have significant IP development value and the ability to convert and monetize in the future.

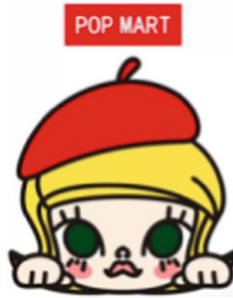
## 3 Analysis of Visual Image Features Based on “POP MART”

POP MART, as the most popular IP image in blind box market, has been loved by children and young people in recent years. The MOLLY series quickly entered the public eyes and was highly sought after due to its unique and exquisite cute girl image, diverse styling styles, and adorable character settings.

This little girl with a bit of proud and petite personality has blonde short hair, lake green big eyes, and a visual image of pouting small lips (Fig. 1). The success of IP characters cannot be separated from the interesting and various external forms of IP images, unique shapes, and reasonable use of materials. We take Molly’s image design as an example to analyze its features of visual language from the colors, shapes, and materials.

### 3.1 The Expression of Colors

Research has shown that when observing any object, the first thing that triggers a visual reaction is color. Different colors have different visual characteristics and may cause different emotional and psychological changes in the audience [3]. Colors are vivid and emotional, and warm colors are usually used to create a bright, lively, and warm experience atmosphere, which can generate excitement. The cool colors will give people a stable, comfortable, and calm visual experience. Among Molly’s numerous series, the overall color choices are mainly bright colors such as red, orange, yellow, pink, and blue. The majority of contrast colors have high color saturation and brightness, and the



**Fig. 1.** MOLLY image (Images from the network)

overall use of colors is coordinated and unified, creating a comfortable, lively, and lovely visual experience for the character image and scene atmosphere, which meets the visual aesthetic needs of the young audience as the main group. Appropriate color extraction and matching can provide the audience with both visual satisfaction and emotional changes, which is beneficial for the IP image to fully recognize and remember quickly.

### **3.2 The Expression of Styling**

The styling of IP images usually includes character styling and subsequent products. The unique and beautiful styling structure helps to express the personality characteristics of IP characters and convey emotions to the audience. The design of the IP image's styling structure needs to follow the principles of formal beauty: symmetry and balance, rhythm and rhythm, and unity of change. Designers need to design an IP image that conforms to the aesthetic form based on factors such as character setting, personality traits, and design style limitations. A complete body shape is more likely to give personalized features and also make the IP image more recognizable [4]. Molly, as an image of a little girl with blonde hair and blue eyes, often focuses on painting. Designers often incorporate elements such as a painter's hat, brush, and color palette in her styling design. In terms of facial shape, it is mainly full, round, and soft. The large green eyes and often pouting lips can fully reflect the character's stubborn, cute, intelligent, and proud personality. Secondly, in the clothing, shoes, accessories, and matching scene elements, the designer also designed them exquisitely and lovingly, consistent with the overall style, which well sets off the character image and visual experience conveyed by different series senses, enriching the overall IP image design. Provide the audience with a comfortable sensory experience, inject vitality into the product, and enhance the satisfaction it brings.

### **3.3 The Expression of Materials**

The selection and combination of materials related to IP image can also bring a different visual and tactile experience to the audience. Various materials will visually present different visual and tactile textures based on their unique qualities. The texture, weight, and touch of materials are important elements that affect tactile senses. When the audience experiences various materials with their hands, they will generate rich and diverse visual

and tactile perceptions of different materials in their psychology [5]. IP characters on the market usually use PVC, resin, wood, ceramics, rubber, etc. Enrich the visual expression of IP image design by applying suitable production techniques to different materials. Molly is made of common PVC material, which has the advantages of no irritating odor, convenient consolidation of shape, and easy coloring. The designer combines the main body of the IP character with PVC material and bright colored pigments, and some small decorative components are assisted by transparent frosted PVC material, creating a delicate, cute, tactile, and approachable IP image for the overall Molly image.

## **4 The Design Principles of IP Image Design**

### **4.1 Recognition and Originality**

The recognition and originality of IP image design are its basic characteristics. The most prominent feature of IP roles is their distinctive appearance, which is easy to recognize. Excellent IP image design utilizes the overall color, shape, and material of the characters, allowing the audience to naturally generate joyful emotions and associations while seeing them, thus having effective memory of the character's image. IP characters with unique creativity will quickly be favored and recognized by the public. Usually, IP characters use simple styling, warm color scheme, and exquisite detail design to bring the audience closer in terms of appearance characteristics. At the visual perception level, exaggerated or cute expressions and actions are used to convey character emotions, generate emotional interaction with the audience, and achieve a sense of identification with the product.

### **4.2 Interest and Aesthetics**

Interest and aesthetics are also essential features of IP image design. The interest and beauty of IP image mainly refers to the interest of form and structure, which is a lively visual language and plastic arts [6]. The public is a visual animal, and the beauty and ugliness of IP characters largely determine the audience's purchasing desire and behavior. A visual image with distinct personality characteristics and interest is particularly important, and designers should think about how to achieve novelty, beauty, change and unity, and have a certain aesthetic taste. The unique design and exquisite details of IP characters make it easier to break free from a pile of similar products, and provide the audience with a pleasant visual enjoyment to enhance their purchasing desire and drive purchasing behavior.

### **4.3 Interactivity and Extensibility**

With the diversified development of the aesthetic and spiritual needs of young audiences, IP image design should also focus on the role itself and the interactivity of its extended products. Firstly, at the visual perception level, the attractive appearance and unique cuteness of IP characters can create a sense of affection among the audience, establish emotional interaction with IP characters, and meet their emotional needs. Secondly, in

addition to the characters themselves, offline IP experience stores and series extension products such as water cups, T-shirts, pillows, and scene decorations can all interact with the audience through careful design in both external and internal structures. This requires that the IP image should also pay attention to its extensibility in design. At the beginning of the concept, it should consider some related points encountered in the future extension, grasp the character shape and personality setting, and combine the image with various types of information in a reasonable design to achieve a reasonable integration of the character image and the extension product, with a sense of integrity and coordination.

## **5 Design Strategy for IP Image Construction**

Donald Norman suggested in his book that “in any design fields, the three different levels of instinct, behavior, and reflection are intertwined [7].” The design strategy of IP image design should also focus on the construction of instinct, behavior, and reflection levels. This section mainly discusses how to use visual expression forms and elements to construct specific strategies at these three levels from the perspective of visual design in the visual context.

### **5.1 Instinct Level: Presenting Diverse Visual Forms of Expression**

Instinctive design usually refers to the appearance of a product. The basic conditions for the existence of IP characters in the consumer market are their original appearance, emotional experience, and their essential spiritual core [8]. A visually appealing appearance can lead the audience to engage in cognitive associations and enhance purchasing desire. As an instinctive level, this is the first level that initially attracts the audience’s attention. At this time, both visual perception and tactile perception play an important role, and this primary emotional stimulation can enable the audience to recognize this image character. Introducing the instinctive aspect into IP image design should mainly focus on research in visual and tactile aspects.

#### **Build a Distinctive Visual System**

The visual system mainly includes three levels: color, shape, and material. When designing an IP image, color combinations that can evoke a pleasant viewing experience for the audience should be selected. The overall color tone should be chosen based on the character personality and emotional atmosphere conveyed by the main object. Generally, when the IP image needs to evoke emotions such as happiness, joy, warmth, and positivity, warm colors should be used as much as possible for color matching [9]. When the image needs to make the audience feel ideal, calm, romantic, and mysterious, Try to use cool tones for matching. Unique and exquisite styling usually gives the audience a high-quality experience, and IP characters with exquisite styling are conducive to occupying their place among numerous competitors and avoiding homogenization. The selection of materials is also quite important, tactile perception is also an essential part that affects the user’s purchasing behavior. Comfortable and delicate materials can easily bring the audience closer, giving a warm and humane feeling. Soft and lightweight materials give

people a relaxed, comfortable, and transparent feeling, and different materials can bring different tactile emotions to the user [10].

### **Adopting Diversified Image Design Styles**

At present, many IP image designs on the market are limited to the cartoon style under the influence of the “cute” culture. Although this style can easily make the audience feel close and emotionally gain love and favor, it can also cause serious homogenization of IP image design styles, making it difficult to reflect diversity and differentiation. The design style of IP image should be fully based on its character image setting and role function positioning to choose an appropriate style to showcase the personality of IP characters. For example, cultural endorsement IP can be rooted in the deeper connotations of culture, exploring and expanding the storyline behind it, extracting corresponding visual elements, and designing ink style characters with cultural charm and handsome images. Some trendy cultural and creative IP images can be designed with novel, interesting, fashionable character styles based on the preferences of the targeted audience, and even incorporate some personalized parody elements. IP characters with distinctive visual systems and diverse design styles are bound to be more favored by the market.

## **5.2 Behavioral Level: Emphasis on Functional and Scalable Construction**

The design at the behavioral level can be summarized as the product’s comprehensibility, functionality, and practicality. The key to the continued survival of IP roles in the market is mainly the user experience after the product is owned, as well as the subsequent dissemination and operation of IP. The IP image and its extended products with different functional positioning and character image settings have different usage functions, which will also make the audience experience different usage experiences. To gain audience recognition of the product at the behavioral level, it is necessary to focus on building the functionality and practicality of IP roles.

### **Combining IP Image with Practical Extension Products**

When designing IP image, it is necessary to consider the convenience of subsequent development and extension of products from the perspective of visual form, as well as the transformation and realization of multi-dimensional vision. Whether it’s online digital derivatives, such as mining the story content behind character IPs, using new media technology to generate related apps, games, etc., or using AR and VR interactive devices to break free from a single two-dimensional visual language and create a fun interactive atmosphere, allowing the audience to experience their favorite IP characters and story backgrounds in a close and immersive manner. Alternatively, in terms of offline extension products, it is necessary to comprehensively consider the implementation of physical derivatives. Firstly, select extension products with relatively useful value, such as T-shirts, stickers, canvas bags, phone cases, etc., to endow the characters with functions and make the audience experience that the purchase is “worth it”. The second is that some derivatives such as toys, pillows, and ornaments require three-dimensional



**Fig. 2.** POP MART Offline Experience Store (Images from the network)

character IP images, so when conducting visual design, it is necessary to consider the seamless transformation of their three-dimensional dimensions.

### **Offline Experience Exhibition Activities Related to IP Image**

There are some successful IP characters on the market that often establish comprehensive offline experience venues such as theme parks, mobile experience stores, and main exhibitions. This kind of in store service experience based on exhibitions, multimedia interactions, derivative retail, and other aspects can bring a fun and high-quality, immersive experience atmosphere and consumption environment to the audience [11]. It can also increase the popularity and traffic of the IP image while expanding its dissemination. So when designing and building such offline experience stores, it is necessary to fully reflect the IP image, as well as the overall and coordinated sense of its series of extension products and large art installations, from the visual structure level. In terms of color matching, object display, and material selection, there should be visual elements that fully reflect the theme and corresponding visual expression forms. For example, the central experience store built by Molly series in Beijing (Fig. 2), the overall store, in terms of color selection and decoration style, fully adapts to Molly's role setting and visual characteristics. Centering on the theme of "Toy production line from manuscript to sale", Molly vividly demonstrates its production and manufacturing integration process from manuscript creation, 3D modeling, coloring and packaging. The experience store has clear functional zones, such as product retail area, exhibition area, and display function area, providing a fun and relaxed visiting environment as well as a humanized shared space for visitors.

### **5.3 Reflection Level: Constructing Emotional Experiences Through Visual Elements**

Reflective design mainly refers to the emotional experience that the product brings to the audience and the psychological impression feedback after use. For the IP image, reflection is very important as it can help establish an emotional connection between the IP character and the audience, encourage the audience to repurchase repeatedly with a good emotional experience, and form a stickiness between the audience, the character,

and even the entire brand culture. Based on the target audience, it helps brands formalize and enrich their content and conveyed values [12]. Designers should focus on how to start from the visual expression level and expand their visual thinking when designing, enhancing the audience's sense of pleasure while generating memory emotions and forming emotional identification. This requires a deep understanding of the current audience's aesthetic awareness and orientation, and the construction of the IP character visual system and character settings to create IP characters with high appearance, design and emotional characteristics, so that the audience can have emotional connections and resonance. For example, in designing IP characters with "flawed beauty", the character's personality traits and emotional atmosphere to be expressed can be reflected through external color combinations, unique and playful styling structures, and auxiliary settings of small components. Perhaps it is a male character with a warm but impulsive inner voice, or a female character with a foul and narcissistic but persistent and kind heart. Designers should consider how to use external visual elements to make these characters' personalities more authentic and credible, while strengthening the plasticity and diversity of IP characters. These IP characters themselves, as well as their related scene designs, or their extended products, can have certain visual symbols to symbolize their temperament characteristics. After they have their own character designs and values, the general audience can choose IP images that match their emotional projection from these personalized images with emotional warmth, To meet psychological and emotional needs, there will also be a collaborative emotional experience and value identification.

## 6 Conclusion

IP image design, as a visual symbol with personalized characteristics and vitality, narrows the distance with the audience and effectively helps brands convey culture and values. It is lively and variable, full of storytelling and narrative possibilities. And for an IP character with a distinctive and adorable personality, the first step in visual expression is to have a beautiful appearance and a unique design style. In addition, it is essential to endow the character with emotional warmth and direction. This requires IP image designers to continuously cultivate in the three directions of instinct, behavior, and reflection, Create unique labels and differentiated recognition symbols for IP characters from external visual languages. Exploring the visual form design of IP image can not only promote the improvement of the quality and continuous innovation of IP roles on the market, but also form relevant systems and scale effects, promoting the development of the IP industry.

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