

New Thought Trends of Shoe Product – “Made in China” Changes Idea of Design

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Abstract: Because of “Made in China”, the shoe business faces to an embarrassing condition, including the development of market and the fierce competition of international brand. So, the present conditions should be changed through innovation designs to win the shoes market. This article first elaborated the shoe designs and explained modern shoe designs. Then, from the design theories and design consciousness, several kinds of shoe designs were analyzed to show the value of shoe brands and the vigor of shoe enterprises. In a word, this paper demonstrated three aspects, i.e. modern shoe designs, ideas and orientation of shoe designs and transformation from manufacturing to design.

Key words: shoe designs; modern designs; Made in China; design trends; brand transformation; orientation of design

1 Introduction

“Made in China”, has more and more penetrated into the Chinese footwear industries. It is named from the rapid development of the domestic shoes. Is this title derogatory or commendatory to China's shoes? Certainly, the designers and entrepreneurs have to pay serious attention to this question.

Especially when many of Chinese footwear products have been labeled "Made in China", it symbolizes the backwardness of China's industry and blind areas of brand development. Italy has anti-dumped leather goods to China. The increasingly serious brand cloning in China has heavily damaged its international effects of domestic footwear brands. This reflects the reality of “Made in China”. In essence, this is also a challenge to China's shoe industry. The most important is how to relive “Made in China”, design our own products and show the world the real power of China footwear industry. In fact, this is also what footwear designers should pay most attention to.

2 Designs of modern shoes

Design means the planning process which was set for a specific goal, a solution and strategy. It involves a very wide range, including the basic design principles, the design rules, the design history we learned, and how to make detailed rules or stipulations in theory, planning, product, design and operations¹. To sum up, design aims to reflect the process of human society, the life, culture evolution, and is an important means to uphold the aesthetic needs of the society.

It is known that design is an activity that human beings conduct to meet their own needs for their survival. Humans use their heads to make things when they are in great trouble, which may tell us the basic meaning of design. In other words, the basic problem, which the design aims to solve, is to realize the function of human activities, namely, the practical value of these substances.

Of course, the thinking and images of different design types in different historical periods is quite different. For example, in industrial designs, rational analysis is oriented; in product design and

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architectural design spatial imagination is emphasized, which will achieve through designers' imagination, rational analysis and emotional understanding; in clothing design aesthetic is more focused on. So the concept of modern design has penetrated into every aspect of human life from either the way of thinking or the value of products. The newly designed products can be seen everywhere in every field².

As an indispensable part of apparel design system, footwear designs have become most fashionable with the development of the times. Its existence is the external performance implied a modern way of life. Driven by such an important role in the society, the footwear design has been unable to extricate itself from the modern design. As a footwear designer, perceiving the fashion, we must follow the law of historical design development, and realize the importance of modern new designs.

Modern footwear design is no longer a separate entity. It not only has profound and artistic origins, but also has had close ties with science and technology. In addition, modern footwear design also involves such issues as in economy, society and life. These footwear design works are likely to be the products expanding the market, so in the design process designers must take into account such issues as the cost consumption of the product and market orientation, and develop their own design ideas from design, production, circulation and consumption.

It can be said that modern footwear design is much concerned with material production, modern science and technology. For shoe designers, it is necessary for them to use a broad range of knowledge, skills and comprehensive humanistic quality, and in the process from design consciousness to production, they should comprehensively follow the tide of modern designs. Therefore, designers are required to know well such sciences as sociology, philosophy, aesthetics, consumer science, marketing, literature, psychology, color science, folklore, and communications. Only in this way will designers adapt to the times and the market, meet the need of consumers, and create valuable product designs³.

In such an era of economy and information, modern footwear designs have undergone a special social change, and design and the designer's role have become increasingly important.

3 Footwear design trends

Shoe design has been gradually mature, and should not reuse previous design thinking to prevent fashion. Influenced by the development of market economy, footwear designs have also begun a new trend. Either from the design concept, design thinking or design methods, shoe product designers need to maximize a variety of factors in modern designs.

(1) Traditions should be inherited and spread better⁴. (Fig. 1) Reforming the traditional designs is now the most respected design philosophy, and is also the only way to a long-term brand development. For example, retro trends are popular, international brands have developed neo-classical trend fully. Now this is the new concept of design. Inherit the tradition and do not lose the brand image of original brands, but, skirted by fashionable elements, footwear designs possess stronger market temptation and brand influence.



Fig. 1 Traditional design

(2) Designers need to take into account the needs of consumers in designing innovative products, and perceive purchasing psychology and requirements of consumers. As product users, consumers occupy an important position in the market. Any classic products, designs, artistic works are ultimately recognized, used and inherited only by consumers, that is, the so-called general public. So is especially with footwear designs. Only to meet the growing aesthetic and purchasing desires for consumers, can new designs be successful. Products' image can be guaranteed.

(3) The new footwear designs require designers' new understanding towards life, and new creations in modern civilization. Designer's designs manifesto the rhythm of life and is detailed creation in life. Understanding a new way of life and creating new, healthy and reasonable way of life are also new connotations that modern footwear designs should have. Whether it is a simple design (Fig. 2), or a complex idea⁵ (Fig. 3), designers are concerned about the details of life and attempt to reflect the life taste. The details of life can be used in the designs, and then footwear design can be fitter with life and more vigorous. This kind of footwear design has really been in conformity with the design concepts advocated by Mr. Liu Guan as follows. The acts and process of people's lives are truly direct external causes for designs, which determine the emergence and evolution of the design. The most fundamental for researching designs is to research the external causes for designs, understand the real needs of people, and put it into products.



Fig. 2 Simple design



Fig. 3 Complex idea

(4) Establish the design team. This is a new idea in footwear product design, and is also the most important issue in many domestic enterprises currently. Many footwear enterprises do not have a design team who can take the responsibility for the overall design flow. With no design team cohesion and no powerful support for enterprise designs, it is impossible to compete and challenge with international brands in designs. Attracted by the charm of brands, designers in LV top design team have played its own role in LV Empire. The unity and partnership of the design team help make Louis Vuitton a top brand. Long-term vitality of the brand is maintained not by an individual but by an organization. So are with any domestic shoe enterprises. Recognizing the significance of the design is still far from enough, only when there is a design team with a team spirit can design market be occupied.

So for footwear product design magnificent appearances are necessary, but exquisite design rich in connotations are more important, and designers should understand thinking transformation in footwear design in different periods of time.

4 The orientation of footwear design: from manufacturing to design transformation

Design transformation predicts reorientation in footwear design. The international market is developing rapidly, international brands are introduced into the domestic market, which results in fierce competition, and which can not be resisted by the management concept—imitated manufacturing. In the new market environment, domestic enterprises get to know fast information technology, and appreciate new trends issued by fashion conferences more quickly than consumers. And what do enterprises require designers to do? “You look at those who can use, those can be changed”. “First change, and then design.” This is our product design. It is precisely misunderstanding product design orientation that makes China have the title “Made in China”. Isn’t China to initiatively design its footwear products but must she be still on the way to clone?

Any one footwear brand just symbolizes shoe product itself. In a sense, the brand leaves a product image in the minds of people, and is the external reflection to their spiritual needs. The key lies in transformation from the material manufacturing to the design. However, apart from the “cloning” phenomenon in the industry, designers are in good or bad quality, have limited way of thinking, rely too much on computers, cannot fully understand life, and cannot orientate the design. Thus, a lot of footwear designs are not much concerned with the products, out of touch with consumers, and designers don’t pay enough attention to details, fail to take function and form of into account, personified factors are less emphasized, and designs are not linked with values of enterprises, and so on. These serious and practical problems are restrictions to the development of China’s footwear enterprises.

Today, the footwear entrepreneurs have also clearly recognized that the design department is the source of the creation for enterprises. Products are designed by designers, and enterprise operations, planning should focus on product design. In particular, as for the development of footwear brands, the survival and advance of footwear enterprises, design is the most critical step⁶.

Enterprises should study centuries-long international business brands, and they not only learn their good management, but also analyze their design essence, they would do this rather than copy or imitate. Human-oriented designs should be emphasized; designers pay attention to details and trends of life; designers are to pilot the tide and create the fashion; they reach the perfect unity between the spirit and material in designing modern fashionable products; designers should focus on the combination of tradition and innovation. Using design, designers help enterprises to improve competitiveness, to open new markets, to increase economic efficiency and brand values, to improve production processes and innovation and problem-solving skills, and they make great efforts help China’s original designs recognized by the market and the world. It is a tendency for designers to design their unique products, to transform from “Made in China” to “China Design”.

5 Conclusions

Shoe industry development asks for quality products, and strict management of production and sales. But the most important is its courage and ability to initiate. In modern high-quality footwear design, designers must focus on the reality, and in the face of market and customers’ needs, they should take into account such factors as materials, prices, market sales, customer feedback, consumers’ aesthetic trends. Moreover, they’re able to appropriately grasp the central principles of the design, should have their own

understanding of the history, effectively use fashion elements, creatively make changes, and display the spiritual essence ultimately implied and the maximum value created by footwear products.

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