A Study on the Brand Imagination and Design Strategy

Hsiao Ju-Fang  Fan Chen-Hao  Lee Yun-Wen
National Taiwan University of Arts  National Taiwan University of Arts  National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan

1. Purpose and motif

Consumers do not purchase a product for the sole purpose of buying the physical content of the product, but also what the product presents socially, what it makes them feel. These things have become more meaningful. Companies see their brand as something they can apply to market their product, promote the differences in their product will help them differentiate their product with their competitors. This will strengthen consumer’s recognition of their product and create more market for their product.

The research tries to find out how to transform abstract corporate identity to a tangible product; how to induce an idea of company product into form can truly conceptualization and furthermore develop a unique style of their own, so consumer understand the ethos of the company, their culture and style. The values and preferences of the consumer can be probed, clarifying how consumer feels towards design value and brand marketing and providing designers with a basis of product design.

2. Product’s attribute and consumer needs

Newman (1957) said, “Product is a symbol that is formed by its form, size, colour and function. These symbols will have different importance and influence depending on its and others need; as well as its interaction and different correlation with society. Therefore, a product refers to the intentional and unintentional meaning it transmits when one looks or uses it. By analyzing the product in terms of the level that it fulfills the needs of consumer value, a product’s attribute can be categorized in the following three types:

(1) Basic function attribute

This refers to the value that is fulfills the basic consumer needs, which are the basic functions that deals with physical needs and everyday problems. These attributes fulfills the physical needs of the consumer, satisfying them in terms of their senses. A consumer will be satisfied through the possession and usage of the basic functions of the product.

(2) Convenience function attribute

This refers to the attribute that will deal with the basic needs of the consumer as well as giving them a sense of convenience. These attributes fulfills consumer needs on the level of their senses and it is achieved through the convenience it provides when a consumer is using the product.

(3) Psychological function attribute

This refers to the attributes that symbolizes status, which will satisfy the emotional and psychological needs of a consumer. A consumer will reflect their own characteristics onto the product and sees the product as their alter-ego.

3. Method

The first phase is to find out about the consumer’s profound concept through ZMET. The chain-relation of MEC then forms “attributes-result-value”, so the relation level of consumers on the products’ product attribute, consume result and personal value is gained. Further rich connotation gained from MEC&ZMET is then fused into the emotional program of products, to confirm the mode of transaction between the consumer and the product.

These deeper values, characteristics and preferences are used to grasp needs that consumers have yet to discover. Elements that are needed to stimulate needs of the product are then found to conduct a design method that will fit with consumer’s preferences. Method: There are twelve subjects are used on interview. In-Depth Interview is used on a one-on-one basis to find out about the preference and needs of the consumer. Laddering is used to build the chain of consumer attributes-result-value to understand how consumers transform product attributes into meaningful connotations. Hierarchical Value Map (HVM) is then induced.

4. Evaluation

This will induce the important thoughts and feelings of the consumer’s favourite product, in order to extract the preference and needs of this group.

(1) Product form and colour: The form of the product tends to be rectangular, oval, minimal and simple geometric shapes. The form is created for its necessity; the complexity of the living space is reduced through the design of simple elements that can comfortably integrate with the living environments. relaxing
sensation.

(2) Intuitive control: Metaphoric and imitative product form, which are familiar actions of everyday habits that is transformed onto the using behaviour of the products. This consideration of using user behaviour integrated with life experience reduces the distance between the user and the product.

(3) Application of natural materials: Most of MUJI’s products are manufactured using natural or recycled materials. They are kept as close to their natural form as possible, without too many artificial manufacturing. Recycling and preservation of energy are also important issues to them, they want to be more natural and gain from nature.

(4) Experience of Japanese lifestyle: When a consumer purchases at MUJI, they do not just purchase the product itself but in addition, all the simple, natural and basic lifestyle the product presents. Once they discover that such simple products can also provide high quality and aesthetics to their lifestyles, it fulfills their longing for a simple life.

5. Conclusion

In total, 43 key concepts were formed as part of the HVM. This study is based on the inner need and attribute organization of the HVM, using a mode consisting of images and texts to present MUJI consumers preferences. They are namely: comfort, good taste, love for nature, experience and culture.

(1) Comfort

Extracting many natural elements, the simple and non-pretentious style is loved and affirmed by consumers. The subjects are searching for a comfortable and happy lifestyle and it is their hope that through the usage of MUJI’s products, that is what they get. Using cotton and linen, the use of colour is full of happy vibes and natural conformation. They are also thoughtful about the integration of user behaviour and life experience, which are applied on their appliances and products.

(2) Good taste

MUJI is a brand that does not emphasize their branding, and yet there are many consumers that chooses the brand because of their branding. They recognize this lifestyle, and not the added-value the brand brings them. They are concerned about the quality of their life that the product enhances, such as simple design that integrates with their living space. These are all the attitude and taste that MUJI users are trying to show.

(3) Love for nature

A consumer that purchases MUJI products often has the spirit of supporting and loving nature. They eat healthy food, using non-harmful products and wear natural fabrics. It is a thoroughly basic, simple, environmental-friendly “MUJI spirit”. MUJI chooses not to use certain materials for the sake of providing environmental-friendly products. Consumers praise the low-key and respect of nature design attitude that MUJI proposes, it is all about “going back to the basics”.

(4) Experience and culture

A consumer that purchases at MUJI, does not only purchase the product itself but also the simple, natural and fundamental lifestyle the products provides. This is inspired by the freshness of nature, the characteristics is fresh and natural; also reflecting a traditional “simple beauty”. It emphasizes concise and clean forms. The second significance is how it presents nature and reflect nature, providing an unpretentious beauty.

In conclusion, the design proposals are as follows:

1. Presenting a natural, reflecting nature and austere feel. Natural and recyclable materials are used.
2. Colour planning: Simple, basic tones that avoids overly bright colours that does not conform well with other products, reducing the complexity of life.
3. The exterior is built with simple forms without additional decorations.
4. Searching for previous experience on product usability and control and re-design.
5. The materials of the products can be recycled and reused.
6. Finding design characteristics from traditional Japanese lifestyles such as zen, Japanese garden.
7. The spirit of LOHAS overlaps with MUJI internms of consumer traits; they both emphasizes on natural, healthy, environmental-friendly and simple lifestyle. This is a group that should be investigated.

Reference