

VOL 8
SPRING/SUMMER
2024

Design Behaviors

INTERNATIONAL DESIGN RESEARCH JOURNAL

Jiajia Zhao

*Lead Author: Graduate Student
Hanyang University, Korea*

Research on the Image Narrative Strategy of Public Welfare Posters Based on Image Narrative Expression

2-19

Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.

*Corresponding Author: Graduate Advisor, Professor
Hanyang University, Korea*

Wang Haoyue

*Lead Author: Doctoral Student
Hanyang University, Korea*

Discover the impact of cultural factors on the design and branding of the fashion brand 'Gentle Monster' through the application of CCBD

20-33

Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.

*Corresponding Author: Graduate Advisor, Professor
Hanyang University, Korea*

Xie Zeyuan

*Lead Author: Graduate Student
Hanyang University, Korea*

Explore Somaesthetics for improving the Embodied Experience in Interactive Museums

34-53

Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.

*Co-author: Graduate Advisor, Professor
Hanyang University, Korea*

COPYRIGHT © 2024 BY UNITED DESIGNS ALLIANCE. The contents of the Design Behaviors Journal may not be reproduced in whole or part without consent of copyright owner, United Designs Alliance.



UDA THE GLOBAL DESIGN ORGANIZATION
United Designs Alliance FIRMITAS • UTILITAS • VENUSTAS

Discover the impact of cultural factors on the design and branding of the fashion brand 'Gentle Monster' through the application of CCBD

Wang Haoyue

Lead Author: Doctoral Student, Hanyang University, Korea

Albert Young Choi, Ph.D.

Corresponding Author: Graduate Advisor, Professor, Hanyang University, Korea

ABSTRACT

Gentle Monster, a fashion brand with the brand philosophy of “innovative experimentation,” engages in cross-disciplinary collaborations with the arts, commercializing art and gradually evolving into a new business form within the fashion industry. The offline stores of Gentle Monster, which serve not only as retail spaces but also as art galleries, exemplify this innovative and aesthetically driven business model. This model imparts profound cultural significance to the brand, attracting dedicated followers among certain young consumer groups.

To understand and analyze audiences for fashion brands like Gentle Monster, this study employs the Cultural Code Brand Design (CCBD) theory. CCBD is a methodology for organizing cultural factors related to design and branding, establishing a brand design strategy necessary for developing brand products and services with culture codes, and systematically developing diverse brands. Using the research methods of CCBD, this paper analyzes the audience of fashion brands represented by Gentle Monster, focusing on Complex Decision Making, Consumer Needs, and Cultural Influence.

This study takes Gentle Monster as a representative case, delving into the audience's complex decision-making, consumer needs, and cultural influence, revealing the impact of cultural codes on fashion brands. The insights gained not only contribute to the academic understanding of the intersection between culture and fashion but also offer practical implications for guiding positive audience perceptions and enhancing the brand's overall value proposition.

This aesthetically strong business model enriches the brand's profound cultural connotations, garnering admiration from certain segments of the young consumer population. The brand analysis of fashion brands represented by Gentle Monster serves as a valuable reference for guiding positive brand recognition and optimizing brand value. This paper aims to obtain valuable insights into how cultural codes, as elements of culture, can impact the success of a brand and to understand how to implement effective strategies for designing and branding fashion products.

KEYWORDS

CCBD (Cultural Code Brand Design Methodology), Gentle Monster, Fashion Brand, Cultural Factors, Consumer Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Background and purpose of the study

With the development of economic globalization and network information technology, the world is becoming increasingly flat, and business competition is becoming fiercer. Faced with a large number of similar products, consumers are surrounded by various brands, and product homogenization is severe. When choosing products, consumers consider the utility value of the products themselves, as well as the brand, the symbolic meaning of the brand's identity, and the brand's added value. Therefore, brands need to establish a good brand image to attract public attention, enrich brand culture, and expand influence.

Since the advent of pop art, the boundaries between art, consumer culture, and design have become increasingly blurred. The construction of a brand image requires new thinking. Due to the strong expressive, creative, and unique characteristics of art itself, it happens to meet the conditions for brand innovation and image shaping, making cooperation between brands and art ubiquitous.

Gentle Monster is a typical case. Gentle Monster's offline stores serve as both sales spaces and art galleries. Artworks are usually displayed in the center of the gallery, surrounded by products. In response to this phenomenon, this paper takes the Gentle Monster brand as a case study to explore the current development status, consumer groups, and future impact of brand culture formed by the cooperation between brand and art. This paper aims to sort out

the cultural codes as the cultural elements influencing the success of the brand.

Scope and method of research

This study is a case study. The research scope covers the design of Gentle Monster’s online promotional materials, offline stores, and other brands.

The paper begins with a literature review on CCBD theory and audience analysis in the fashion brand context to establish a profound understanding of existing research and theoretical frameworks. Subsequently, through an in-depth examination of Gentle Monster’s brand case, key aspects such as brand philosophy, historical development, and cross-disciplinary collaborations are explored to provide background information for audience analysis. Building on the CCBD theory, a theoretical framework for audience analysis is constructed. Qualitative research methods are then employed to engage in in-depth discussions with Gentle Monster’s audience, understanding their attitudes, perceptions, and consumer behaviors. Finally, a combination of statistical analysis methods and qualitative analysis tools is applied to comprehensively analyze the collected qualitative and quantitative data, identifying patterns, trends, and correlations to answer the research questions.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS OF GENTLE MONSTER

Using the traffic analysis website Similarweb, data on the visit volume of the Gentle Monster website (www.GentleMonster.com) in March 2023 can be obtained. The data shows that the browsing audience aged 18–34 accounts for 64.09% of the total population (Table 1), with the browsing audience aged 25–34 accounting for the highest proportion at 34.49%. Therefore, the primary target audience of the brand is the Generation Y demographic. The Generation Y demographic is characterized by high levels of education, strong personalities, openness, and sensibility, while also exhibiting herd mentality, strong curiosity, and a preference for distinctive attire (AY Choi, 2018).

Table 1. data of the visitors of the Gentle Monster website in March 2023 (Source: www.similarweb.com/zh/website/gentlemonster.com/#overview)



In terms of pricing, Gentle Monster's products are priced above 300,000 Korean won, comparable to eyewear brands such as Ray-Ban. Compared to students aged 18–24 with no income and young professionals aged 25–34, the price of Gentle Monster is relatively high. Therefore, Gentle Monster is positioned as a high-end product in terms of pricing, and its corresponding user demographic is less price-sensitive, positioned in the upper-middle class level.

Additionally, there are regional biases in the optimization of Gentle Monster's product design. Gentle Monster eyewear has been redesigned to suit the facial characteristics of Asians, meeting the wearing needs of Asian consumers. Asians generally have lower nose bridges and relatively softer facial features, unlike the deep and angular features of Europeans and Americans. Gentle Monster addresses this pain point by developing glasses with large frames and high nose pads, making the face appear smaller. Slightly exaggerated eyewear shapes can correct the problems of low nose bridges and a lack of three-dimensionality in Asian faces.

Overall, based on the network data, pricing, and product positioning of Gentle Monster, its target audience is the high-end Asian demographic aged 18–34. This demographic is characterized by personalities that are open, sensitive, curious, and desiring to be distinctive, as well as exhibiting a herd mentality. Therefore, the proportion of people who pay attention to socializing and fashion is higher. They typically have a higher level of education and better economic capabilities. The lifestyle characteristics of Gentle Monster consumers are shown in Table 2 (AY Choi, 2018). They are young people with certain economic means and educational backgrounds who enjoy fashion, social, and entertainment activities.

Table 2. Measurement of lifestyle characteristics of Gentle Monster

Measurement of lifestyle characteristics		
Activities	Interests	Opinions
work	family	personal relationship
interest	home	social relationship
social activities	work	politics
vacation	community	career
spare time	recreation	economy
club	fashion	educate

COMPLEX DECISION-MAKING OF CONSUMERS BASED ON CCBD

According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory, human needs can be classified into five levels from low to high: physiological needs, security needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs (P. Kotler, G. Armstrong, 1999). Gentle Monster eyewear products can meet consumer needs in the dimensions of physiological, social, and aesthetic. Firstly, the products possess the basic functions of vision correction and sun shading, which can satisfy consumers’ physiological needs. Secondly, the eyewear serves as a decorative function to enhance facial appearance. Consumers choose to purchase them due to the different styles of decorative functions, which meet consumers’ social needs. Lastly, when faced with products that have corresponding identity symbols and design-added value, the target group will purchase them out of preference and self-esteem, thus meeting consumers’ esteem needs. At the same time, people in the social environment surrounding the target group will also follow social trends to purchase products, satisfying their social needs.

Correspondingly, the Physiological needs, Social needs, and Self-actualization needs can be associated with the principle function and derivative function theory of Cultural Code Brand Design (CCBD). Cultural coding is an essential function of brand design. That is, the principle function and derivative function of brand design (Choi AY, 2018).

From the principle function perspective, Gentle Monster products are designed based on Asian facial shapes, and the design style, being exaggerated and uniquely decorative, meets the target audience’s practical needs (as shown in Table 3).

Table 3. Gentle Monster’s Principle Functions of Brand Design(PF)

Gentle Monster’s Principle Functions of Brand Design(PF)	
Source	Unity of business and art
Quality	Very artistic
Price	Expensive, but a high-end brand that young people can afford
Practicality	Compared with the original function of glasses, more attention is paid to the decorative function of glasses.
Brand Association	Fashion, Individuality
Demographic Information	The main target group is young people who pursue individuality
Trend	Continue to export artistic and experimental brand culture
Lifestyle	Guide consumers to pursue fashion and individuality
Personality	Very individuality

On the derivative function, the Gentle Monster brand has a more distinct brand personality compared to ordinary eyewear brands, thus giving the target audience a unique image of “fashionable and experimental”. This image results in high loyalty among its target users (as shown in Table 4).

Table 4. Gentle monster’s Derivative Functions of Brand Design(DF)

Gentle monster’s Derivative Functions of Brand Design (DF)	
Differentiation	Artistic and very different
Symbolic	A symbol of Individuality and fashion
Loyalty index	high
Popularity	high
Image	personality, fashion, experimental

Table 5. Gentle monster’s Derivative Functions of Brand Design(DF)

Gentle monster Brand (PF > DF)	
Principle Functions (PF)	Derivative Functions(DF)
Source	Differentiation
Quality	
Price	Symbolic
Practicality	
Brand Association	Loyalty index
Demographic Information	
Trend	Popularity
Lifestyle	
Personality	Image

Overall, the derivative function of Gentle Monster exceeds the principle function (as shown in Table 5).

Therefore, when the target audience needs a pair of vision-correcting or sun-shading glasses and desires a fashionable appearance that meets their personalized needs, they choose Gentle Monster products. The importance of high-end products in meeting consumers’ social and esteem needs far outweighs their physiological needs (as shown in Table 6).

Table 6. Consumer decision process

Stage	Process	Standard	GM brand	Design elements
1	cognition problem	basic needs, specific needs	Need a pair of corrective or sunshade glasses and want a stylish look.	Font: Simple sans serif color: Each series usually uses different bright colors to give people a strong visual stimulation Typography: The layout is simple, mainly highlighting the product Pattern: None Texture: Each series will use different textures according to the theme. For example, the bold series uses laser texture Auxiliary Graphical Elements: None style: a style combining experimentation and art trend: fashion
2	information exploration	understanding of motivation	price, features, design	
3	Choice of strategies and evaluation	Evaluation Criteria: Attributes and Importance	Research Eyewear Brands	
4	purchase decision	Brand evaluation, design evaluation	Select Gentle Monster	
5	post-purchase evaluation	positive experience, negative experience	affordable price, unique shape, stylish design	

Brand design must motivate consumers to make purchases and aid them in selecting brands (Choi AY, 2018). To attract target groups, fashion brands such as Gentle Monster inevitably need to enhance brand personality through brand design, thereby adding identity symbols to the brand. When consumers perceive a brand as having personality, they will find using the brand for self-expression beneficial, resulting in a strong demand for purchases.

Gentle Monster's approach involves using art to expand its brand personality. The value provided by art surpasses consumers' objective needs and brings power, respect, and social distinction (Zhang J, Kim CY, 2020). Brands can gain emotional value through art, thereby increasing consumers' attachment and loyalty to brands.

THE INFLUENCE OF TARGET GROUP CULTURE ON BRAND BUILDING

The cultural code derived from the analysis of the target population can guide the brand and provide it with a direction for brand personality. The target population for Gentle Monster consists of high-end Asians aged 18-34. They are young individuals with a certain level of economic means and educational background who enjoy fashion, socializing, and entertainment activities. The

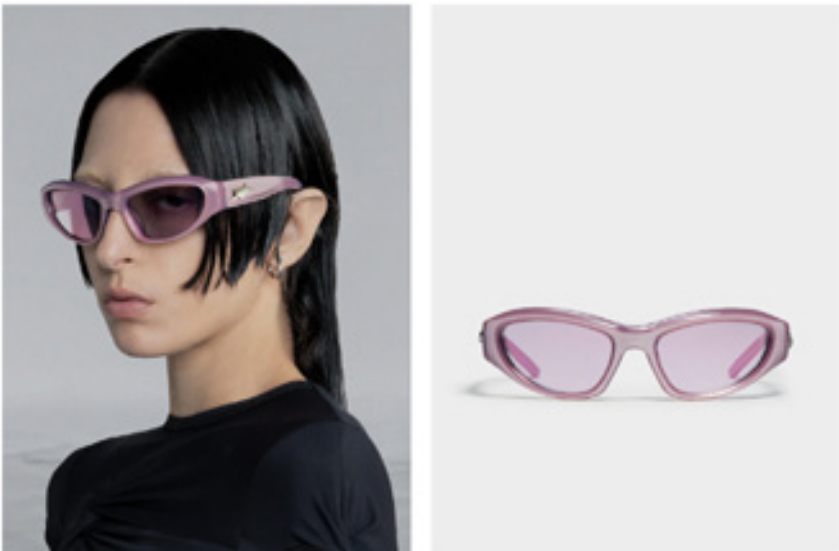
consumer decision-making of this group tends to be biased towards the derivative function of the product. Gentle Monster's corresponding strategies are:

1. Designing with exaggerated shapes and bright colors.
2. Creating an abstract and fashionable artistic atmosphere through artistic installations.
3. Influencing the crowd through the celebrity effect.

Designing with exaggerated shapes and bright colors

Gentle Monster is designed with exaggerated shapes, vibrant colors, and abstract connotations. Regarding its products, Gentle Monster offers a rich Abstract Visual Representation. Gentle Monster's products can be considered works of art themselves. The product's appearance design is bold and the shape is distinctive. For instance, Gentle Monster introduces its latest collection, 'BOLD'. Starting from 2023, various themes portraying daring and audacious attempts will be annually launched as variations of the BOLD line. The first theme, titled 'Galaxy of 9 Evenings', incorporates stars in the galaxy, which metaphorically symbolize the boldness of the collection. The shape of this series of glasses gives people a feeling of technology and outer space (as shown in Fig.1). Combining fashion art with the imagination of the future, this fusion of artistic images endows Gentle Monster with a unique futuristic and experimental brand image.

Figure 1. 2023 BOLD series products



Regarding advertising vision, Gentle Monster employs exaggerated body movements to express intense emotions in an artistic manner (as shown in Fig.2).

Figure 2. Gentle Monster's brand print advertisement



Regarding packaging, Gentle Monster's Hierarchy Visual Representation is straightforward. Gentle Monster's packaging does not feature highly intricate structures and patterns. It typically combines bold colors with technological materials, providing consumers with the most direct visual impact. Its information hierarchy is clear and straightforward (as shown in Fig.3).

Although Gentle Monster's packaging changes continuously with the rotation of different product series to provide consumers with a sense of novelty, the overall style of Gentle Monster's packaging remains simple and fashionable. Regardless of how Gentle Monster's packaging evolves, it remains concise and stylish. The overall content design of the packaging includes only the Gentle Monster logo, series logo, series colors, and materials and styles matching the series. The packaging communicates what it is in a simple, direct manner, allowing consumers to quickly associate it with the brand image.

Figure 3. BOLD series packaging and



Creating an artistic atmosphere through artistic installations

Gentle Monster adopts “innovative experiment” as its brand concept. In the course of Gentle Monster’s brand communication, the most prominent feature is the utilization of art installations to convey its brand value to consumers. In offline stores, art installations occupy the majority of the space and are introduced with the release of different product series. This imbues every Gentle Monster store with an artistic and futuristic sensibility (as shown in Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Gentle Monster’s Beijing offline store



While Gentle Monster's primary business is selling sunglasses, the area occupied by the art installations in the store far exceeds the area where the products are placed (as shown in Fig.5). In terms of art design, the installations in Gentle Monster stores meet very high artistic standards and visual effects (Kim SW, 2010). The art installations in the Gentle Monster stores change with the update of the product series, and all art installations in stores are uniformly produced in the same factory and shipped to each offline store by air. Each time replacement is required, the artwork needs to be shipped back to the factory and destroyed. Artwork serves as a selling point to attract consumers and also represents Gentle Monster's differentiation. Artwork gives stores a new personality and also provides brands with more opportunities to experiment and innovate based on art.

Figure 5. Installation art in Gentle monster store



Art installations in offline stores constitute the primary element of Gentle Monster's brand promotion. This method of publicity, which combines products with art installations, can be quickly remembered by consumers. Through the medium of art, the product presents an abstract creative concept. This approach not only showcases the eyewear products to consumers but also imbues glasses, a practical product, with an extremely strong sense of style and artistry.

Installation art, as a novel form of advertisement, represents only the initial step in brand communication. The objective is to prompt further consumer engagement with the brand through curiosity. With this abstract emotional experience, Gentle Monster has successfully cultivated a fashionable brand image in the minds of consumers. Consumers encounter the brand in an environment

filled with an artistic atmosphere. They become immersed in the emotional ambiance of offline stores and complete the process from unfamiliarity to understanding to recognition of the brand.

Influencing the crowd through the celebrity effect

Gentle Monster is closely associated with the attributes of fashion and art. To reinforce its fashion attribute and appeal to the target audience, Gentle Monster has leveraged K-POP, popular among young people, to create a celebrity effect and tap into the herd mentality of the youth. Young people often consider celebrities as their reference group and seek to imitate them by purchasing and using the brands endorsed by celebrities.

For instance, in 2013, Cheon Song-yi, the heroine of the popular Korean drama “My Love from the Star”, popularized Gentle Monster sunglasses. In recent years, Gentle Monster eyewear has frequently been spotted in the airport outfits of major stars and on magazine covers. In Asia, there are celebrities such as Black Pink’s Jennie (Fig.6), Li Yifeng, etc., and in Europe and the United States, there are international supermodels Kendall Jenner and Gigi Hadid.

Figure 6. Black Pink’s Jennie endorses Gentle Monster



These collaborations represent not only a simple form of advertising and marketing but also open up new opportunities for stars to engage in deeper product collaborations. In this manner, the derivative functions of the products can be expanded to meet the social and self-esteem needs of consumers.

CONCLUSION

The Gentle Monster brand amalgamates business and art. The primary audience comprises high-end Asians aged 18-34 who are fashion-conscious. The brand concept of “experiment and art” reflects its personality and fashionable brand image, fostering high consumer loyalty. Based on the social and self-esteem needs of the target demographic, Gentle Monster’s brand design direction is biased towards the derivative functions of the product.

Gentle Monster promotes its brand with art installations in offline stores, characterized by personality and fashion. The packaging features strong color stimulation, and the actions of advertising characters are exaggerated, providing consumers with a comprehensive visual stimulation experience. By employing artistic creativity, the brand guides consumers to form a positive understanding of the brand, thereby achieving high sales and establishing the brand value of fashion, experimentation, and art.

Art is a reflection of people’s real life and spiritual world. It is the product of artists’ emotions, ideals, and thoughts, and can resonate with others’ emotions and consciousness. The brand regards art as the medium to convey the idea of the brand, making the brand artistic through art, enhancing the connotation of the brand and the product itself, differentiating the brand from similar brands, and attracting consumers for personalized consumption.

REFERENCES

- Choi A Y. (2018). Cultural Code Brand Design Methodology[M].Book Lab
- Choi A Y. (2005). "Conceptor" as a Methodology for Developing Design Concepts Context to a Multi-layer Perceptron[D]
- Xing K, Lin B, Choi A Y. (2022). Understanding Korean Aesthetics in the Package Design of the History of Whoo by Culture Code Brand Design (CCBD) Methodology[C]. International Conference on Design and Digital Communication
- Chun W, Choi A Y. (2022). Analyzing the Layout Design of the HuangHai's Movie Posters Context to the Visual Elements of the Culture Code Brand Design (CCBD) Methodology[C].International Conference on Design and Digital Communication
- Hong S A, Han H R.(2017). Satisfaction with an Eyewear Flagship Store and the Expression Methods of the Brand Experience Space-Based on Eyewear Brand'Gentle Monster'[J]. Korean Institute of Interior Design Journal
- Zhang J, Kim C Y.(2020). Research on the Influence of the Collaboration between Fashion Brands and Artists on Consumer Needs-Centered on the Collaboration Series between Uniqlo and KAWS[J]. Journal of Korea Multimedia Society
- P. Kotlor, G. Armstrong. (1999). Principles of Marketing[M]. Prentice Hall Europe
- K. Pielah, V. Rajiv, H. Chang, S. Leslie. (2020). Using Brand Alliances with Artists to Expand Retail Brand Personality[J]. Journal of Business Research
- Wang YS. (2022). Analytical study on visual culture codes of stamp designs utilizing culture Code Brand Design Methodology (CCBD) : focused on Chinese stamps in the culture & arts category issued from 1949 to 2022[D]
- Kim S W.(2010). A Study on Non-Representational Characteristics Shown In Digital Art[J].Journal of Korean Society of Communication Design