

The Chaoshan Guo Molds Culture under Semiotics Theory Creative Product Design

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the application of semiotics theory in the cultural creative product design of Chaoshan guo molds. The research focuses on the historical development, symbolic characteristics, and cultural connotations of guo molds. A combination of literature review, interdisciplinary methods, and field research with artisans in Chaozhou and Jieyang was employed. The study utilizes a semiotic triadic model to analyze consumer perceptions and integrates Chaoshan cultural symbols into tea set design. Data collection tools included questionnaires and interviews, with analysis conducted through qualitative and quantitative methods to assess cultural and market impact.

The findings reveal that Chaoshan guo molds symbols encapsulate profound cultural meanings, such as auspiciousness, longevity, and prosperity, which can be effectively translated into modern product designs. By incorporating these symbols into tea sets, the products not only preserve traditional craftsmanship but also appeal to contemporary aesthetic preferences. The study suggests a design framework that bridges cultural heritage and modern consumer needs, fostering cultural dissemination and innovation. Future recommendations include leveraging digital tools and interdisciplinary approaches for enhanced cultural preservation and creative design practices.

Keywords: Chaoshan Guo Molds Culture; Semiotics Theory; Creative Product Design

Introduction

In the current field of cultural and creative design, ceramic art design, as a crucial component of the integration of traditional craftsmanship and modern innovation, has become an essential driver for the development of the cultural industry. In regions with a long history and profound cultural heritage, such as the Chaoshan area in Guangdong, traditional "guo molds" pattern designs have gradually evolved into part of modern visual art design, providing new perspectives and opportunities for the inheritance and innovation of cultural heritage (Wang, 2022). Moreover, design methods based on semiotic principles, such as the graphic design of the five-senses experience, have become effective tools for enhancing the perceptibility and interactivity of ceramic art design, driving the application and development of ceramics in cultural and creative products (Lu, 2022). Similarly, animation has been demonstrated to be an effective medium for preserving and inheriting traditional customs, as evidenced by the creation of animation to inherit polder rice farming culture in Jiangnan water towns (Tang, Bunlikhitsiri & Panthupakorn, 2024).

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In recent years, the traditional ceramic craftsmanship of the Chaoshan region, particularly the design of inlaid porcelain, has garnered increasing attention from scholars. Xu (2023), in his study, explored the cultural and creative design of Chaoshan inlaid porcelain from the perspective of Pierce's semiotics, suggesting that this design not only enhances the artistic value of ceramic products but also helps elevate the cultural recognition of local traditions in the global context. It is in this cultural context that in-depth research on the modern expression of traditional Chaoshan ceramic design, and its transformative significance in the contemporary cultural creative industry, becomes especially important. This research not only respects and preserves traditional culture but also provides a rich cultural source for innovative design, fostering the recognition and competitiveness of locally characteristic products in the market.

Therefore, studying the modern expression of Chaoshan ceramic art design, especially in creative designs guided by semiotic theory, holds significant theoretical and practical value. This research not only helps to excavate and promote local culture but also provides new design methodologies for the development of the cultural and creative industry, supporting the revival and innovative application of traditional crafts in contemporary society.

Research Objectives

1. To study the application of semiotics theory to study the semiotic characteristics of Chaoshan Guo Molds culture.
2. To analyze the connotation and cultural symbols of Chaoshan Guo Molds, which will help to create a design model, separate the design elements, and decode the symbols of Chaoshan Guo Molds.
3. To study the cultural product design strategies of Chaoshan Guo Molds symbols together with the theoretical basis.
4. To obtain the application guidelines for tea set design that can be applied in modern creative works.

Research Methodology

1. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, integrating semiotics theory with cultural creative product design. The research combines literature review, interdisciplinary approaches, and field studies to investigate the symbolic characteristics and cultural significance of Chaoshan guo molds and their application in contemporary design.

2. Population and Sample

The study focuses on artisans, workshops, and cultural practitioners in Chaozhou and Jieyang, regions known for their traditional Chaoshan guo molds. A purposive sampling method was used to select a representative group of craftspeople and consumers familiar with guo molds culture.

3. Research Tools

Data collection tools include structured interviews, questionnaires, and observational records. Visual documentation, such as photographs and sketches of guo molds symbols and designs, was also utilized to support the analysis.

4. Data Collection

Fieldwork was conducted in traditional guo molds workshops, where artisans were observed and interviewed to document their techniques and cultural practices. Consumer

surveys were distributed to gather insights on preferences for cultural creative products and tea set designs incorporating Chaoshan guo molds.

5. Data Analysis

Qualitative content analysis was applied to identify recurring themes and symbolic meanings in guo molds designs. Quantitative analysis of survey data was conducted to assess consumer preferences and potential market demand for products featuring Chaoshan guo molds symbols.

6. Conceptual Framework

The study is based on Peirce's triadic model of semiotics, emphasizing the relationship between signs, objects, and interpretants. Such models have been successfully applied in various artistic domains, including the construction of theoretical frameworks for dance sports performance and creation from a semiotics perspective (Liu et al., 2023).

Research Findings

1. Symbolic Analysis of Chaoshan guo molds under Semiotic Theory

The initial theory of semiotics was proposed by Ferdinand de Saussure, who posited that a sign is comprised of two elements: the "capable" and the "indicative." This theory served as the foundation for subsequent semiotic studies (Saussure, 1916). In his theory of general semiotics, Charles Sanders Peirce classified symbols into three categories: images, indications, and symbols. He emphasised the multi-level interpretation of symbols and the relationship between symbols and the real world. Roland Barthes expanded the field of application of semiotics, investigated the symbol system in cultural phenomena, and provided methodological support for the interpretation of symbols in cultural products .

Peirce's triadic theory of relations represents the central concept of his semiotic theory. This comprises the sign or reproducer, the object, and the interpretive term. The object represents the entity signified by the symbol or reproducer, including both direct and dynamic objects. The direct object is the entity represented by the symbol within a specific process of meaning. In contrast, the dynamic object necessitates ongoing investigation to ascertain its intrinsic nature (Peirce, 1931-1958). In other words, the dynamic object serves to determine the sign, and the sign is in a state of constant reference to the dynamic object through the direct object. The interpretive term represents the process and outcome of the sign user's cognitive, interpretative, sensory and responsive engagement with the sign. Peirce divides the interpretive term into two parts: the sign's own information and the sign user's general knowledge about the real world. The latter is a prerequisite for the former, which is in turn continually transformed by the latter. Furthermore, Peirce posits that a symbol is comprised of three interpretative terms: the immediate interpretant, the dynamic interpretant, and the final interpretant. The immediate interpretant represents the most superficial and externally perceivable self-presentation of the symbol, conveying meaning through a vague feeling directly caused by the symbol without analysis. This feeling is generated by the symbol user without conscious thought and belongs to the category of first-level existence. The dynamic interpretation term represents the interpretation of the symbol made by the symbol user after using the symbol. It can also be defined as the actual impact of the symbol on the symbol user regarding the object, and the impact of the dynamic interpretation term differs after each interpretative act experienced. This can be considered the second level of existence. The final interpretive term is the purposeful and lawful ideation of the sign, or the effect of being fully thought through. It

can be considered to belong to the tertiary sphere of existence. The dynamic interpretation term (Peirce,1931-1958).

In the field of Peircean semiotics, the majority of scholars concentrate their attention on the relationship between the sign or reproducer and the object in Peirce's triadic relation. Conversely, the role of the explanatory term is relatively under-examined, particularly in the context of practical applications. In accordance with the four formal conditions of symbols put forth by Peirce, symbols must either reproduce the object in some aspect or capacity or be connected to the object in some way. The "presentation condition" of the sign, in turn, establishes the minimum depth of meaning that each sign must possess in order to be considered a sign. Furthermore, an interpretation of the sign by the user is necessary for the sign to be established. In the context of Chaoshan guo symbols, the designer can be considered the encoder, while the consumer represents the user. It is therefore evident that, in addition to focusing on cultural symbols and cultural and creative products, consumers who act as symbol users represent a factor that cannot be ignored in design research. This paper employs a triadic relationship model in conjunction with market research to elucidate consumers' awareness of Chaoshan guo molds, analyze consumers' consumption habits and experience needs for purchasing cultural and creative products, and determine the design positioning of Chaoshan guo molds cultural and creative products, product categories, and promotional methods. This is achieved through the administration of questionnaires (Figure1).

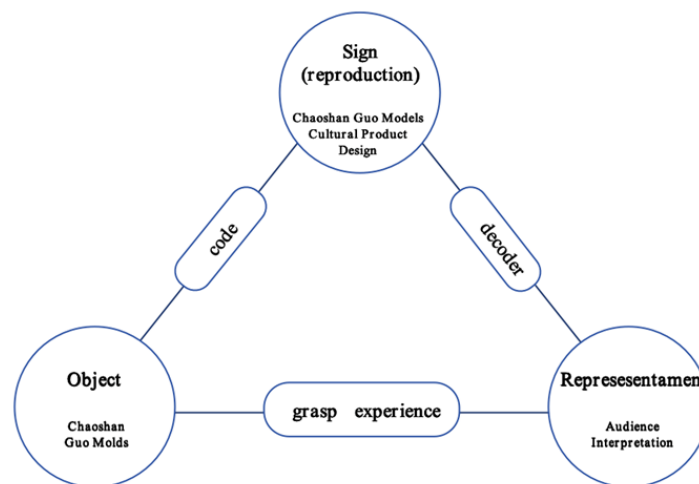


Figure 1 Ternary Relationship Modelling of Chaoshan guo molds Symbols
 (Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

2. Chaoshan guo molds Symbol Code

2.1 Image Symbol Coding

The encoding of likeness symbols is to extract the visual representations of objects, i.e. shape, colour, pattern and composition, and to refine their visual characteristics (Figure 2). The shapes and colours of Chaoshan guo molds belong to the intuitive part of external vision, which can be perceived directly through the visual senses. The lotus, gourd, double money and pomegranate in the pattern of the guo molds seals retain their similarity to the real thing and simplify the depiction of details (Figure 3); the colours are mainly composed of different shades of logs, which is a single colour expression, but not limited to it. Some of the Chaoshan guo

molds are also in natural tones such as red and black, adding a touch of simplicity and elegance; the composition retains a layered visual effect due to the shape of the moulds, and the motifs are beautifully decorated, which can be considered exquisite in their conception.

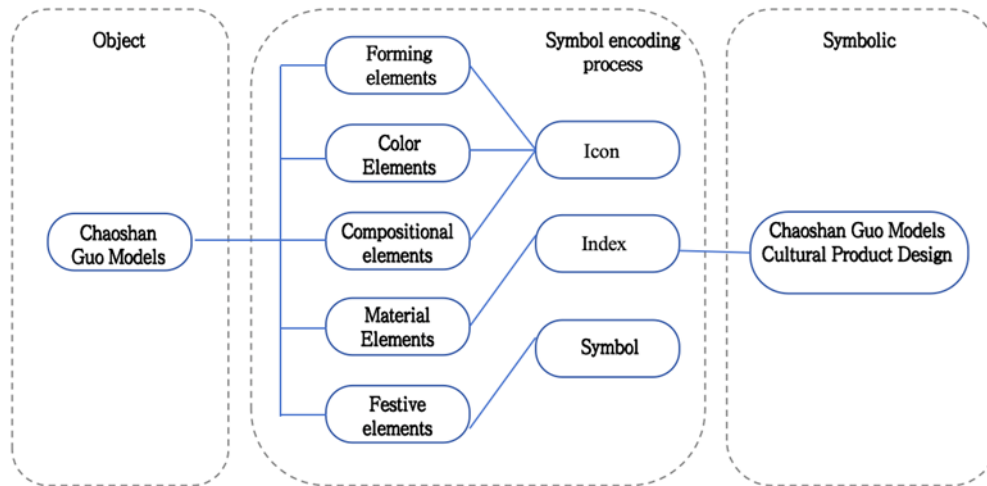


Figure 2 Applying object trichotomy model
(Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

Targets	source of the extract	Form Coding	color coding	composition code
lotus flower				Same position, shape and color symmetry
lotus flower				Same position, shape and color symmetry
calabash or bottle gourd				Symmetrical echoes of position, with differences in shape and color
double dime				Same position, shape and color symmetry

Figure 3 Chaoshan Guo Molds Icon code
(Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

2.2 Indicator coding

Indicative symbols are associated with objects in a way that implies a causal relationship. The relationship between tea snacks and tea is exemplified by the interconnection between turtle guo and Chaoshan Kung Fu Tea. The shape of turtle guo is inherently indicative of a causal relationship with the form of a tortoise. Upon observing turtle guo, the form of a tortoise is readily associated with it, as both are symbols of longevity. Similarly, when a tortoise shape is observed, the shape of turtle guo is also associated with it. Furthermore, Chaoshan

Kung Fu Tea, a prevalent local folk culture, can be consumed as a complementary guo, which constitutes a mutually reinforcing relationship with the Chaoshan guo molds culture as a cultural complex of the Chaoshan people. Chaoshan turtle guo, as an indicator of Chaoshan guo molds culture, is indirectly associated with Chaoshan kung fu tea. The coding of indicator symbols can facilitate the communication of more indirect connotations to consumers through the medium of cultural and creative products. The coding of indicator symbols for Chaoshan inlaid porcelain is summarised in Figure 4.





Targets	Type of association	Source of the extract	Encodings
red peach guo	Indicate cause and effect		Important Symbols of Rituals and Folklore in Chaoshan Area
Turtle guo	Indicate cause and effect		The shape connotes longevity and the pursuit of vitality
Kong Fu Tea	Indicate cause and effect		Common Folk Cultures in Chaoshan Area and Cultural Complex of Chaoshan People
Chunsheng	Indicate cause and effect		The traditional handcraft products of Chaoshan area are the embodiment of folk culture and aesthetic concepts

Figure 4 Chaoshan Guo Molds Index Code
 (Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

2.3 Encoding of Statutory Symbols

Statutory symbols lack any intrinsic correlation between similarity and existence. Furthermore, the meaning of the objects they represent is arbitrary, determined solely by the inertia of people's agreed regulations. The Chaoshan guo molds is imbued with a rich spiritual connotation, which is primarily manifested in the symbolic elements. Of the animal symbols associated with Chaoshan guo molds, the tortoise is the most prevalent. It symbolises longevity and good fortune, reflecting the cultural practice of venerating life among the Chaoshan people. In the context of Chaoshan guo molds, the peach is a botanical symbol that represents happiness and prosperity. The pomegranate flower is a symbol of repelling evil spirits and bestowing blessings upon one's son. The aforementioned themes of Chaoshan guo molds lack a representational connection with the symbols they represent; rather, they are conventions that have been transmitted from one generation to the next over an extended period of time within the social context of the people. The symbolic codes of the Chaoshan inlaid porcelain statutes are presented in Figure 5.




Targets	Source of the extract	Encodings
May you have happiness and good luck!		Chaoshan Peach Kuey Teow Seal has a simple and exquisite pattern, and its unique pattern is the prerequisite for its function of indication. The peach shape and the character "Shou" are the traditional patterns widely used in Chaoshan Peach Guo Molds, and the first thing to do is to carve two "Ruyi leaves" underneath the Peach Guo Molds seal, and the shade of the character "Shou" on both sides of the seal. Each pattern of the peach Guo Molds seal has a certain indication function: the character "Shou" indicates longevity, and the floral patterns on both sides of the character "Shou" indicate longevity; the peach leaf underneath, also known as the "Ruyi Leaf", indicates that everything is as it should be. Peach shape around the cloud thunder pattern and other geometric patterns around the small peach shape, large peach with small peach, play a certain role in repeating the emphasis, but also set off the theme of decorations.
Live as long as Mount Nanshan.		Turtle pattern is the most common auspicious pattern among all Guo Molds, taking the meaning of longevity of the turtle, which originated from the ancient culture of turtle worship. Turtle Guo Molds is carved with a symmetrical oval-shaped turtle pattern on its molded surface, with characters such as "longevity", "blessing and longevity", "blessing like the East Sea", "longevity like South Mountain", etc. carved in the middle. In the center are inscribed characters such as "Shou", "Fuk Luk Shou", "Fortune is like the East Sea", "Longevity is like the South Mountain", and so on, either in seal script, clerical script, regular script, or cursive script.
Drive out devils and prevent calamities		Pomegranate is called "Saffron" in Chaoshan folklore, and the Chaoshan people must have a pair of Saffron in their engagement and gifts, no matter how heavy or light they are. Safflower is used in a large number of folk affairs such as marriage, funeral, "going out to the garden" and treating children's night cries due to the fact that "Safflower is the emperor, and Safflower wards off evil spirits". The combination of peach kuey teow with pomegranate and pomegranate flowers has multiple meanings, such as warding off evil spirits and having many children.

Figure 5 Chaoshan Guo Molds Symbol Code
(Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

3. Decoding of Chaoshan guo molds Symbols

The process of decoding, also referred to as decoding, entails the interpretation and comprehension of the symbols received, as well as the discernment of their underlying meaning. The inverse process of encoding is decoding, which requires the receiver to accurately identify and understand the information or meaning conveyed by the symbols in order to facilitate the effective transmission and exchange of information. The process of symbol decoding represents a pivotal aspect of the transmission of symbolic information. It encompasses the manner in which decoders interpret symbols in accordance with their individual cultural background, cognitive schema, and social environment. The role of decoders is of great consequence; they are not merely the recipients of information, but also the generators of meaning. In the decoding process, decoders interpret symbols in accordance with their own experience and knowledge, thereby forming an understanding of their meaning. Provided that the decoder does not assume the role of the initiator and cease their interpretative process, the interpreted items will continue to be transformed into new symbols, and the meanings ascribed to these symbols will be extended and disseminated. This process, to a certain extent, facilitates cultural exchange and integration. Furthermore, the capacity for multiple interpretations is a significant aspect of the decoding process. This reflects the inherent richness and openness of symbolic meanings, facilitating the potential for cultural diversity and innovation.

An investigation into the process of symbol decoding and an enhanced comprehension of the mechanism of symbol communication facilitate a more discerning attention to the cultural connotations of symbols and a concentration on the formation of cultural consensus in the subsequent design practice. The process of decoding, also referred to as transliteration, entails the interpretation and comprehension of received symbols in order to ascertain their

meaning. The act of decoding, which may be considered the inverse of encoding, necessitates that the receiver possess the capacity to accurately identify and comprehend the information or meaning conveyed by the symbols in order to facilitate the effective transmission and exchange of information. Symbol decoding represents a pivotal aspect of the transmission of symbolic information. It encompasses the manner in which decoders interpret symbols, a process that is shaped by their individual cultural background, cognitive framework, and social environment. The role of decoders is of great consequence; they are not merely the recipients of information, but also the creators of meaning. In the decoding process, decoders interpret symbols based on their personal experience and knowledge, thereby forming an understanding of their meaning. As long as the decoder persists in interpreting, the interpreted items will be transformed into new symbols, and the meaning of the symbols will continue to expand and disseminate, thereby, to a certain extent, promoting cultural exchange and integration. Concurrently, the decoding process is characterised by the coexistence of multiple interpretations, which exemplifies the richness and openness of symbolic meanings and offers avenues for cultural diversity and innovation (Figure 6).

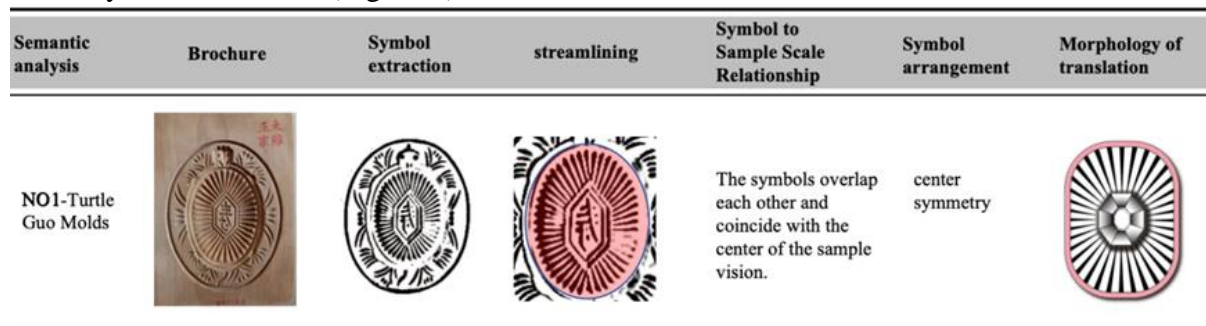


Figure 6 Creating content based on codes
 (Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

4. Cultural Creative Product Design

Cultural creative design offers a novel avenue for articulating the rich heritage of Chinese culture, facilitating its adaptation to contemporary contexts and enabling its sustained evolution. Cultural and creative design is a novel synthesis of culture, art, design, science and technology. It represents a significant paradigm shift in design concepts and industrial modes, and has emerged as a pivotal driver of global innovation and economic growth. Cultural creative products are essentially products that are imbued with distinctive visual representations and cultural connotations, which serve both the purpose of disseminating culture and that of providing practical functionality.

The process of Chaoshan regional cultural and creative design is also a process of developing Chaoshan regional cultural resources, which is conducive to the inheritance and development of Chaoshan culture. Presently, the application of innovation in Chaoshan kuey teow prints is primarily concentrated in the domain of cultural product design, encompassing items such as kuey teow prints pendants and kuey teow prints ornaments. However, the products are of a limited size, which restricts the consumer population to a certain extent and hinders the cultural dissemination of Chaoshan kuey teow prints, which is not conducive to the development of Chaoshan culture. A search of the internet revealed that no Chaoshan kuey teaware products related to kuey tee have yet been sold on the market, indicating a significant opportunity for improvement in the cultural combination effect.

5. Application of Chaoshan guo molds Symbols in Contemporary Cultural Products

5.1 Ideas for the Application of guo molds Symbols in the Design of Contemporary Cultural Products

Chaoshan guo molds is characterized by unique folk culture. The production of Guo Molds and guo molds is closely connected with the seasons and festivals of the people, and the production of various kinds of traditional Chaoshan guo molds in the eight festivals of the year is used to pay homage to ancestors, which is a unique folkloric color, and it has become a bond that maintains the ties between the Chaoshan people at home and abroad. Chaoshan guo molds is well known in Chaoshan, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan and overseas Chiu Chow society, and is loved by Chiu Chow people at home and abroad, which makes it a medium to maintain and enhance the friendship of the township. In the guo molds packaging design to break the traditional Chaoshan guo molds only appear in the seasonal situation, the guo molds and guo molds integrated into a cohesion of Chaoshan culture label. This gift box of guo molds carries a strong background of Chaoshan culture and customs, as well as an orthodox Chaoshan guo molds flavor. It is like a business card of Chaoshan to satisfy consumers' curiosity about the mysterious culture of Chaoshan, to let travelers forget the loneliness of being in a foreign land with this taste, and to let the people who are still guarding the land of Chaoshan to pay more attention to the spiritual civilization, traditional handicrafts and gastronomic culture of their hometowns.

A clear and definitive design process must be employed in the extraction and transformation of Chaoshan guo mold information. This process should be divided into three steps. The initial stage is the design preparation phase, which encompasses two key processes: the excavation of cultural information and the comprehensive organisation and integration of this data. The excavation of cultural information involves locating and determining the design theme, followed by a systematic examination and synthesis of the cultural information associated with Chaoshan guo molds. This information is then organised into a coherent and structured content hierarchy.

The second stage is the design presentation phase, which involves: The second stage is the design presentation stage, during which the views are drawn, the style of visual presentation is established, design elements are sought to transform the unit's cultural information visually, and design techniques are applied to arrange the layout and composition of the visualised unit information and to touch up the colours. The third stage is the promotion stage of the design application. The final stage is the promotion of the design application. This involves the user interaction and the application of the design works of the Chaoshan guo molds symbol information design in the design of tea set products. This assists consumers in interpreting and analysing the cultural information of the products through the visualisation, thus achieving the purpose of promoting and disseminating the Chaoshan guo molds culture.

5.2 Chaoshan guo molds Tea Cultural Symbol Design--Series Tea Set Design

The production technology developed by Chaoshan guo molds has a history spanning over five centuries. Rooted in the traditional culture of Chaoshan, it draws upon the region's expertise in wood carving, combining this with an understanding of the aesthetic principles that shape the public's perception of quality. This has resulted in the emergence of a distinctive set of cultural symbols that are unique to Chaoshan. The current market trend for tea sets is towards a modern aesthetic, with a homogeneous styling and colour language. Regional characteristics of Chaoshan are not commonly found in tea set designs. During the

research process, it was found that some products only make changes to the structure of the form, without considering the cultural connotations. The cultural symbols are superimposed without attention to the real meaning of the cultural injection, which results in a lack of regional and cultural elements and an inability to achieve emotional interaction with consumers. The product is devoid of regional and cultural characteristics, rendering it incapable of eliciting an emotional response from consumers. Consequently, the product design of Chaoshan guo molds must be based on the product's intrinsic characteristics and cultural connotations. It must cater to the needs of consumer groups, be market-oriented, and meet the requirements of personalisation. Furthermore, it should be designed to create differentiated, personalised tea products with brand recognition functions.

In light of the preceding organisation and categorisation of guo mould symbols, the characteristics and symbolic connotations of the various symbols were clearly identified and refined. They were then designed in a directional manner, with careful consideration given to their symbolic significance. The conceptualisation of this tea set design was inspired by the guo molds symbols. The turtle is a creature that has been imbued with a number of positive attributes, including longevity, prophecy, wealth and invincibility. As a result, the turtle is regarded as an auspicious symbol in many social contexts, signifying good luck and good fortune. Consequently, the auspicious images of the turtle are derived from and generalised across the positive attributes of longevity, foresight, wealth and prosperity ascribed to the turtle. As an instrument of daily life in the Chaoshan area, the turtle guo molds reflect the Chaoshan people's remembrance of their fathers and grandfathers, the infinite emotions sent by the object, and the rich emotions triggered by the custom of rituals, such as reverence for the gods, prayers for family members, and the pursuit of the future. These artefacts, created during the agricultural era, represent a cultural memory that is deeply embedded in the region's cultural identity. They encapsulate the accumulated wisdom of the ancestors, reflecting the rich cultural heritage of the Chaoshan people. The reason for the selection of the tortoise as an important sacrificial image by the people of Chaoshan is due to their recognition of the ancient Central Plains "tortoise life" totem and their own knowledge of marine culture.

The term "tea culture in Chaoshan" is used to describe the complex of practices, beliefs, and social interactions surrounding tea among the Chaoshan people. In the Chaoshan area, it is customary for almost every family to possess a gongfu tea set. Regardless of whether it is after work, after a meal, or when entertaining guests, people are accustomed to gathering around a small tea table, awaiting the preparation of soup, and engaging in conversation about their family life while savouring the tea. The atmosphere is characterised by a sense of warmth and cordiality. Even those of the Chaoshan diaspora who have taken up residence in other countries continue to observe the custom of drinking Kung Fu tea.

The combination of the turtle guo molds symbol and the Chaoshan tea culture represents the convergence and fusion of the Chaoshan culture and the crystallisation of the wisdom and national sentiment of the Chaoshan ancestors. This serves to evoke the identity of the Chaoshan people and act as a bonding force within the community. The design of tea sets incorporating turtle guo molds evokes profound memories among the public, conveying the symbolic connotations that provide a sense of spiritual solace and belonging. The visual translation of the guo molds symbols and their application in the design of tea sets serve to interpret Chaoshan culture with the help of product information. This highlights the intrinsic meaning of the integration of the guo molds cultural information with the products, as well as expressing the colours, shapes, materials, and other characteristics of the products.

Furthermore, the objects within the tea sets facilitate a more profound comprehension of the humanistic spirit and aesthetic concepts inherent to the Chaoshan guo molds culture. This enables a deeper level of communication with the user, reflecting both the product's conceptualisation and its underlying significance. This facilitates a more profound comprehension of the cultural implications associated with the Chaoshan guo molds tradition and enables a conscious exchange with consumers, which not only exemplifies the product's regional identity but also reinforces its cultural context (Figure 7).

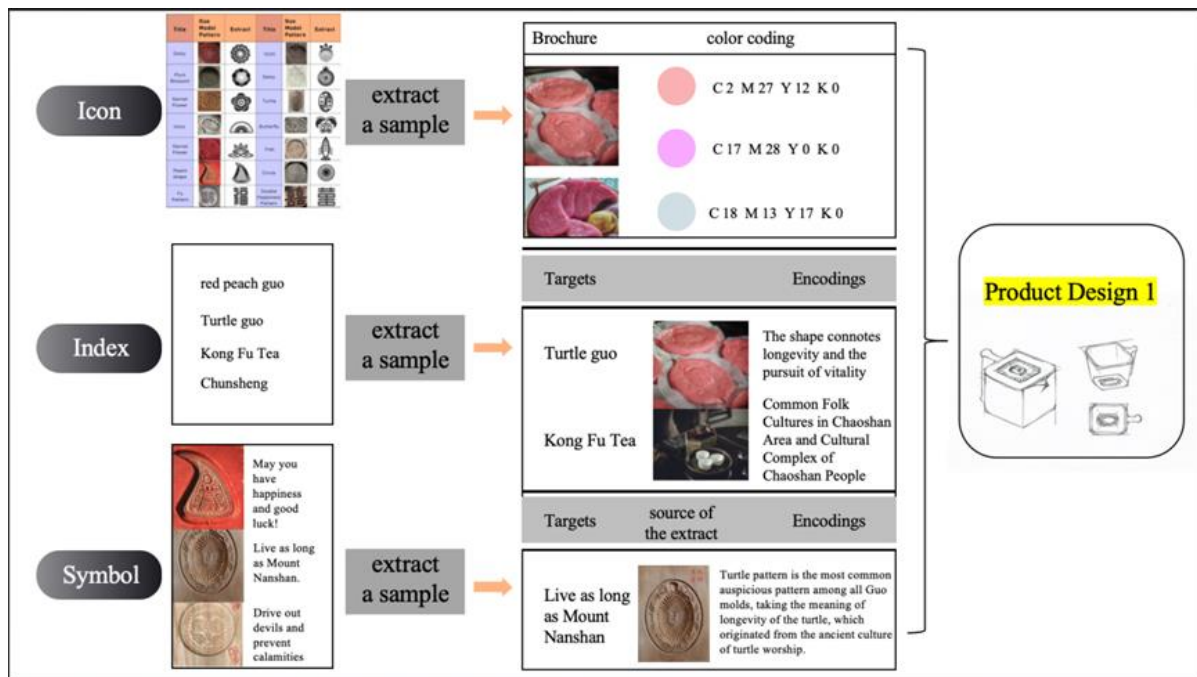


Figure 7 Symbol extraction and design form deduction
(Source: Constructed by the researcher, 2024)

5.3 Tea set design application program

The design strategy of integrating Chaoshan cultural symbols into cultural and creative products should not only maintain the vibrancy and authenticity of the culture, but also align with the requirements and aesthetic sensibilities of modern society. This approach enables the innovative advancement, preservation and utilisation of Chaoshan culture. In particular, the following aspects warrant further investigation.

The initial stage of the design process is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the cultural and creative product in question. This analysis should take into account the product's content, characteristics, and classification. In the model, the Chaoshan cultural symbols are encoded and then expressed through the language of the product, including its function, shape and colour. Chaoshan guo molds cultural symbols are manifested in the design of cultural and creative products in three distinct yet interrelated aspects: stylistic features, functional features and emotional features. Styling features, in contrast, pertain to the external characteristics of the product, including aspects such as aesthetics and simplicity. This is the most direct point of contact between the product and the user. Functional characteristics represent the tangible benefits of the product, such as durability and environmental protection.

Such characteristics determine the user's level of comfort in utilising the product. These determine the degree of comfort experienced by the user when utilising the product. Emotional features demonstrate the spiritual and cultural value of the product, such as its educational and cultural impact, and serve to facilitate emotional communication with the user.

The Chaoshan guo molds cultural symbols are designed in a manner that allows for three distinct forms of expression, with the objective of eliciting experiential feedback from the user. The user's innate visual, tactile and other sensory faculties are employed to facilitate the operation of the product. The objective is to enable the user to experience and engage with the cultural symbolism inherent in the Chaoshan guo molds, thereby fostering a sense of resonance and connection. The feedback from users will inform further improvements to the product.

The methodology described above was employed to extract visual symbols from the material level of the Chaoshan Guo Molds cultural symbols. These symbols were then combined with the spiritual cultural symbols they represent to design Teochew Cultural Symbols for Tea Ware Design.

The longevity of the tortoise is a concept that has been well documented since ancient times, with the animal itself becoming a symbol of longevity. The tortoise's longevity led the ancestors to believe that the tortoise could comprehend the principles of heaven and earth and could foresee the future. This belief represents an evolution of the tortoise's perceived abilities. The turtle is regarded as a symbol of longevity, wisdom, and strength, and is therefore considered an auspicious omen in Chinese culture. When two individuals encounter a turtle by chance, it is seen as a positive sign, indicative of good fortune and success. It can therefore be seen that the turtle's auspicious imagery is derived from and generalises the turtle's beautiful images of longevity, foresight, wealth and prosperity. This allows the symbolic meaning to resonate with contemporary aesthetics or regional culture outside the Chaoshan area. The tea set design proposal employs the turtle Chaoshan guo mold as the primary design element, which serves to reflect the regional cultural characteristics of Chaoshan while simultaneously transcending regional limitations, thereby facilitating broader applicability in other cities. Furthermore, the tea set design has a multitude of potential applications and a broad audience appeal, which lends itself to a targeted marketing strategy. By incorporating the turtle guo molds symbol into the design, the cultural nuances of Chaoshan can be effectively conveyed, leveraging the symbol's widespread recognition and the product's versatility. The utilisation of the turtle guo molds symbol in the design of tea utensils enables the conveyance of the cultural connotations of Chaoshan through the symbol's widespread recognition and the product's extensive utilisation.

From the perspective of graphic symbol innovation, the original turtle kuey teow seal styling symbol elements have been refined with the expressive power of geometric shapes and combined with the expression of contemporary art techniques, such as abstraction and simplification, in order to break the traditional decorative framework and demonstrate a more modern and fashionable style. The colour samples are colour-coded by extracting the classic colour of red peach guo moldsw and turtle guo food – peach colour – to demonstrate the visual colour of unique Chaoshan memories in the design of the tea set, thereby reinforcing the transmission of cultural heritage.

From the perspective of indicator symbols, samples from the Chaoshan culture, including red peach guo molds, turtle guo molds, kung fu tea, and chun sheng, were extracted for the purposes of coding and design. The indicator symbols of turtle kuey teow signify

longevity of good fortune and pursuit of vitality. Furthermore, kung fu tea represents a synthesis of the culture of the Chaoshan area and the culture of the Chaoshan people.

From the perspective of the connotation of symbols, the most representative symbols of Chaoshan guo molds are peach-shaped, turtle-shaped, and round guo molds. In Chaoshan culture, peach-shaped guo molds symbolize fertility and auspiciousness, representing the ideals and prayers for the prosperity of the clan. Turtle-shaped guo molds, on the other hand, represent the derivation and generalization of beautiful images associated with longevity, prophecy, and wealth. The round guo mold represents reunion and is imbued with auspicious symbolism. The turtle guo mold was selected for extraction from the design sample due to its prevalence as an auspicious pattern among all guo molds. The symbolic meaning derived from the turtle's longevity, a practice observed in ancient ancestor worship, is particularly noteworthy. The symbolism of the turtle derives from the animal's longevity, which has its roots in the turtle worship culture of the region.

The teapot and teacups in this design are square in shape, with rounded corners, in accordance with the Chinese concept of the circle of heaven and earth. The outer wall of the teapot and the cups are designed with a gradation of peach-white colour, which serves to enhance the recognition of the products and, at the same time, highlight the symbols of the Chaoshan guo molds seal. The Turtle guo molds symbols are employed in the design of the teapot lid, and the second layer of the structure, from the outer to the inner part of the teapot, is crafted in an oval shape, with radial lines adorning the inner portion. The second layer, from the exterior to the interior, is designed as a slightly square oval shape, decorated with radiating lines. The top of the lid is centred on a raised, simplified octagonal shape, which exhibits a three-dimensional form and represents a variation of the Turtle guo molds symbol. The bottom of the interior of the cup adopts the same design style, but with a flatter shape, so that the Turtle guo molds symbol can be seen against the colour of the tea broth when drinking tea. The handles of the teapot and cup are derived from the handle of the guo molds seal. When viewed from above, the two shapes merge to form the Chaoshan guo molds seal, which represents the integration of Chaoshan culture into the aesthetic principles that shape our lives (Figure 8).



Figure 8 Tea set product model design
(Source: Produced by the researcher, 2024)

Discussion

1. Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study were to explore the symbolic features of Chaoshan guo molds under semiotics theory, develop a framework for translating these symbols into contemporary cultural product designs, and apply the findings to the design of tea sets. Through an interdisciplinary methodology, this research aimed to bridge traditional cultural heritage with modern consumer demands.

2. Research Results

The study successfully identified key symbolic elements of Chaoshan guo molds, including their visual, indicative, and statutory coding systems. These findings informed the design of tea sets that effectively incorporate cultural motifs such as the turtle and peach-shaped guo molds, representing longevity and prosperity. Market research demonstrated that products with strong cultural symbolism resonate well with consumers, enhancing both their aesthetic appeal and marketability.

3. Reflection of Opinions

The results confirm that semiotics theory provides a robust framework for translating traditional symbols into modern product designs. However, the study revealed challenges in ensuring that the deep cultural connotations of Chaoshan guo molds are adequately conveyed to a broader audience. This highlights the need for further efforts in educating consumers about the cultural significance of these designs.

4. Consistency or Inconsistency

The findings align with the research objectives, demonstrating consistency between the theoretical framework and practical application. The use of Peirce's triadic model effectively guided the design process, aligning with previous studies that emphasize the utility of semiotics in creative design (Liu et al., 2023; Tang et al., 2024). However, certain inconsistencies were noted in consumer awareness of Chaoshan culture, suggesting a gap in cultural dissemination that future research and marketing strategies could address.

Recommendations

1. Theoretical Recommendations

Future research in the field of ceramic art design should focus on deepening the application of semiotic theory, particularly in the context of Chaoshan ceramics. Expanding the integration of cultural symbols and meanings into contemporary design practices can provide a more systematic approach for blending traditional craftsmanship with modern aesthetics. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches that combine design theory, cultural studies, and emerging technologies should be prioritized to foster innovation. By exploring the fusion of digital tools with traditional ceramic techniques, designers can develop new, contextually relevant methods for translating cultural heritage into modern products that appeal to diverse consumer groups.

2. Policy Recommendations

It is essential for policymakers to recognize the cultural and economic value of traditional ceramic arts and provide stronger institutional support for their preservation and innovation. This could include establishing initiatives to document and promote traditional craft techniques, as well as creating financial incentives for artisans and designers working in the cultural and creative industries. Governments should also facilitate the commercialization of traditional ceramics by supporting marketing efforts, both locally and internationally. Further, educational policies should encourage the development of specialized programs that integrate cultural heritage with modern design and technology, equipping future designers with the necessary tools to innovate while preserving tradition.

3. Further Research Recommendations

There is a need for more empirical studies on consumer perceptions of traditional ceramic products, particularly in terms of aesthetics, cultural significance, and marketability. Understanding how consumers engage with these products in modern contexts can offer valuable insights into design strategies that better meet contemporary needs. Additionally, comparative studies between different regional ceramic traditions can uncover shared methodologies and unique design approaches, facilitating cross-cultural knowledge exchange. Finally, further research should investigate the potential of digital technologies, such as 3D printing and augmented reality, to enhance traditional ceramic production and design, offering new ways to preserve and innovate cultural craftsmanship.

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