

Design for Aesthetic Experience

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Abstract. Taiwanese government has been aggressively promoting culture creative industries in recent years. To achieve the goals of industry transformation and to better the living environment, it further propels the innovative concept of “creative life industry”.

Demonstrating a new economy model, creative life industry intends to attain experience economy through attracting consumers with life aesthetics. In human life, craft creation comes with multi-values in various aspects. Craft is creative activities humans employ to solve their everyday problems in food, clothing, residing and transportation. It has served two functions in practical objects and art works in human history. In the process of creation, exchange, possession, usage, and appreciation, craft enriches human life and becomes the most valued aesthetic experience for promoting creative life industry.

The purpose of this study is to investigate daily crafts, concerning both industry management and product design, and to establish an appropriate model to promote consumers’ aesthetic experiences on daily crafts. The methods of data collection are survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. With literature review, four experience factors of sense, think, act and relate are defined for writing up the survey questions. Results of data collected from the survey responses and interviews could provide concrete suggestions for artists, designers and business managers who plan for experience activities.

Keywords: Daily crafts, Life aesthetics, Experience economy.

1 Introduction

With changes in economy and consuming styles, Taiwan has moved along from agriculture economy in the past to industry economy, then service economy and recently experience economy [19]. This trend has also completely echoed the four levels of economy proposed by Pine II and Gilmore—commodities, goods, services and experiences. [12]

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Industrial Development Bureau of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the planner and executive of the industry has set up the “Developments plan for creative life industry” in 2003 and divided the plan into six major areas of food culture experience, life educational experience, natural ecology experience, fashion furniture experience, specific experience with cultural or historical relics, and craft culture experience. [12]

Lin [7] suggested that, to enhance its creative power for competition, Taiwan has to actively develop its creative life industry, with the means of applying culture and technology for living styles and life creativity. Among all creative life industries, creative craft is an activity with multi-values. It has served two functions in practical objects and art works in human history. In the process of creation, exchange, possession, usage, and appreciation, craft enriches human life and becomes the most valued aesthetic experience for promoting creative life industry.

2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate daily crafts, concerning both industry management and product design, and to establish an appropriate model to promote consumers’ aesthetic experiences on daily crafts. Through investigation on cultural and aesthetic elements, successful creative life industry and product design policies can thus be established to attract consumption and promote industry development.

The significance of this study can be briefed as follows. For business management, this study can help achieve the goal of promoting creative life industry through the investigation of daily crafts and aesthetics as well as the establishment of experience models based on service purpose. On product design, this study targets at evaluation of the aesthetic experience provided by daily craft and thus would provide valuable referential information for future product development and marketing of creative life industry in Taiwan.

3 Literature Review

3.1 Aesthetic Quality of Crafts

Generally speaking, crafts possess two attributes practical and artistic. In early western world, the concepts of craft and art had been identical. Plato has indicated that “everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing is a kind of poetry; and everyone who practices a craft is a poet.” [13] The differentiation of the two was made after the eighteenth century. Kant, the German philosopher, considers art a different concept from craft; that the former is a liberal play while the latter a remunerative activity. [6] German philosopher Heidegger indicates that the nature of crafts is based on its usefulness and reliability while art is “one way in which truth occurs as unconcealedness.” [2]

Modern crafts pay more attention to present their uniqueness. Products with high craft aesthetic values become more and more well-received to consumers, craft

products with high aesthetic values prevail in our daily life. The well-known Norman indicates that a successful design has to take into consideration all the facets of usability, practicality and aesthetics, appealing to emotion is the key threshold for success. [10] The appeal to design for emotions in the twenty-first century can now be realized through using crafts' aesthetic values.

3.2 What Is Life Aesthetics?

Aesthetics, a branch of philosophy, is a term coined by German philosopher Baumgarten (1714-1762) in the eighteenth century. It explores the area of emotion, one that goes beyond ration and morality in human mental faculty. As defined by Townsend and Santayana, aesthetics is a study of institution, feeling and emotion, in contrast to epistemology and ethics. [15, 18]

What is life aesthetics? Liu states that it is a specific life style manifested when people meaning to symbolize their life experiences. [9] Featherstone suggests that, due to the vague distinction between reality and image in modern society, "life aesthetics" thus rises as a result when people try to make their daily life aesthetical. [1] Liu states that lifestyles and the aesthetics of everyday life are two major operational device for constructing the world of consuming culture life; lifestyles is the concrete living style expressed as a result of the interaction of consuming and culture, while life aesthetics is the decisive threshold in interacting with consuming culture. In sum, lifestyles is the living mode in presenting image and aesthetic experience. Life aesthetics, integrated with art and recreational culture, is prevailing in modern human life and becomes the foundation for finding and constructing personal lifestyles. [8]

3.3 Approaching Experience Economy

Futurist Toffler has predicted, in early 1970s, that the development of human culture is moving from stages of agricultural, industrial towards service economy and that the pressure from both consumers and those who expecting a growing economy has accelerated the shift of a technology society towards a future experience economy. [17] Pine II and Gilmore indicate that experiencing is an activity which creates unforgettable memory while consuming is only a process; even though the process ends, the memory in experiencing lasts. [11] Holbrook further classifies experiencing with four elements—experience, recreation, expression, and transmitting pleasure. Featherstone proposes that what leads modern humans to first desire of possession and then consumption is not only the functions of the commodities but more importantly, its add-on values, or the pleasure brought along with consumption. Consequently Featherstone considers aesthetics or art the best means in arising consumers' desire to consume, and terms such behavior as "aesthetic consumption." [1]

Pine II and Gilmore has set up the Experience Realms with absorption-immersion, active participation-passive participation as its two axes to construct the four experience realms of entertainment, educational, esthetic and escapist. [11]

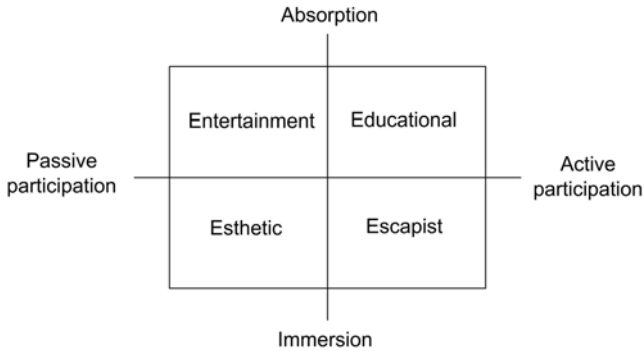


Fig. 1. The Experience Realms (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999: 30)

In his book *Experiential Marketing* Schmitt defines five experience types: [16]

- (1) Sense—stimuli experienced through seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching and lead to aesthetic pleasure, excitement, beauty and satisfaction
- (2) Feel—composed by positive and negative feelings and emotions. Interactive emotions are the strongest.
- (3) Think—through creating surprise to attract consumers' attention and curiosity
- (4) Act—induced by the interaction of creation, behavior modes and lifestyles, consumers show their self-esteem and values through action.
- (5) Relate—concerns cultural values, social status and community belongingness, creates culture or communities consumers like to join, and establishes a unique social identity for the consumers.

Huang suggests that the more versatile experiences a cultural creative industry can provide, the more cultural messages consumers would receive from what they experience. [4] That is to say, aesthetics brings about consumption and the sense of pleasure and beauty attributed to the add-on values. This process is “aesthetics experience”, the core concept of the governmental initiate for creative life industry.









4 Research Methods

The methods of data collection are survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. With literature review on relevant theories, we set up the general research plans for the study. On the one hand, we interviewed experts in the industry to depict how the managers plan their experience activities for the consumers and the status of the art. We then analyzed data collected from two different groups of the consumers and the managers so as to identify the experience elements and modes for daily crafts. Furthermore, we also reviewed previous studies on aesthetic experiences for the collection and construction of our research tools.

The questionnaire was developed based on the five experience types Schmitt proposed for constructing the factors of aesthetic experience. Fifteen questions were written based on the five experience types. The targets for evaluation were eight pieces of prized craft work which outperformed in the two contests of “Taiwan Craft Contest”

and “OTOP (One Town One Product) Design Contest” in 2007 and 2008 (Table 1). The items, taking the Likert scale, were graded as 5 points for “strongly agree”, 4 for “agree”, 3 for “neutral”, 2 for “disagree”, and 1 point for “strongly disagree.”

Table 1. Eight Selected Products Used in the Questionnaire

			
Easy tea set	Glass chess	Zen flavor teacup	Pencil sharpeners
			
Twin-pen	Honeycomb panels furnitures	Zen flavor stationery set	Ceramic table lights

To provide further analysis of the subjects, this study also took socio-demographic descriptors, such as gender, age, and educational background (design majors and non-design majors) as independent variables. Then five factors of aesthetic experience were used as dependent variables so as to investigate the relationship between these two dimensions (Fig. 2).

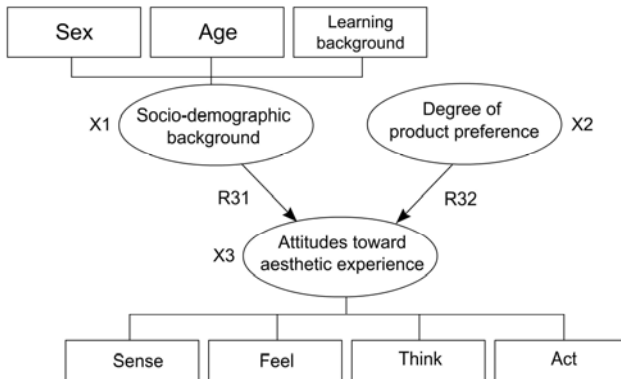


Fig. 2. Framework of the Research Design

A pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire for the analysis of validity and reliability. After the factor analysis of the fifteen questions, four factors of aesthetic experience—sense, think, act and relate—were reconstructed considering their eigenvalue were greater than 1. The four factors and their corresponding questions are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. The Questions under the Four Factors of Aesthetic Experience

Factors	Questions
sense	1. The product evokes your sensational pleasure
	2. The form the product is beautiful
	3. The product is fashionable
think	4. You are touched by the cunning design of the product
	5. The product evokes your curiosity
	6. The product seems to tell you a story
	7. The product evokes your eagerness to explore its connotation
act	8. You feel fascinated by the product
	9. You are willing to adapt yourself to this new product
	10. You are willing to recommend the product to your friends
	11. You want to possess the product
relate	12. You could express your taste through the product
	13. The product reflect you life experience
	14. The product reflect your personal values
	15. Possessing the product helps to raise your social status

5 Data Analysis

5.1 Test of Socio-demographic Descriptors to the Factors of Aesthetic Experience

There were 100 valid questionnaire used for data analyses. The fours factors of aesthetic experience—the gender, educational background and age were used T-test and correlation to analyze their effects on aesthetic experience.

- (1) Among the four aesthetic experience factors, the factor of “think” presents significant differences on gender ($t=2.19$, $p < .01$), female subjects score significantly higher than males.
- (2) There is a significant difference between participants who are design majors and participants who are non-design majors, regarding their opinions on the factor of

“sense” ($t=2.53$, $p < .01$). Non-design majors’ scores are significantly higher than design majors.

- (3) There is no significant relationship between participants’ age and the factors of aesthetic experience.

5.2 Multiple Regression Analysis of the Degree of Products Preference and Aesthetic Experience

This study employs four aesthetic experience factors as predicting variables and the participants’ degree of products preference as dependent variables for multiple regression analysis. The result of the analysis is shown in Table 3.

- (1) The participants’ degree of products preference is positively correlated with the four factors of aesthetic experience ($p < .001$).
- (2) The F value for the overall multiple regression equation is 51.42 ($p < .001$). Each standardized regression coefficient is listed according to the significance. They are respectively “act” ($\beta=.52$), “sense” ($\beta=.30$), “think” ($\beta=.15$) and “relate” ($\beta=-0.7$).

Table 3. Four Factors of Aesthetic Experience to Predict the Degree of Products Preference

Independent					
Variable	r	B	β	t	sig
Sense	.706***	.34	.30	3.64***	.000
Think	.694***	.18	.15	1.64	.104
Act	.778***	.56	.52	5.24***	.000
Relate	.571***	-.07	-.07	-.90	.370

*** $p < .001$

6 Results and Discussion

6.1 Findings

This study constructed an aesthetic experience model based on four experience factors of sense, think, act and relate. Fifteen questions were written based on the experience types. The result of our statistical analyses presents the following major findings:

- (1) The evaluative index of four factors of sense, think, act and relate is constructed**

With multiple regression analysis, this study justifies the feasibility of using the four for evaluating the effectiveness of aesthetic experience activities; act and sense are the most significant predictors among them.

(2) The main factor of consumers' willingness for such experience is the sensational pleasure they receive

Outside appearance is one of the essential factors for the decision to purchase, the main factor for consumers' willingness for such experience is the sense pleasure they receive. The more attractive the product looks, the more willing are the consumers to further appreciate the product and thus be involved in experiencing the product. Among all subjects, consumers with design background is significantly much higher in their expectation of the product –sense attraction—

(3) A product with stories is easier in alluring consumers for experiencing

If a product could reach consumers' emotion, refresh memory or bring reflection, then the consumers will be further involved for greater sense exposure. It is especially easier for female consumers to relate product historical background or development process to their personal experience.

6.2 Suggestions

Some suggestions are generalized from the results of the study:

(4) Successful life craft experience activities should be able to attract consumers for action

Successful life craft experience activities should be able to attract consumers for immediate action. When consumers are touched with the product, there should be products ready for consumers to be able and willing to possess immediately. This is also the goal for promoting aesthetic experience and thus life craft industry.

(5) Attend to relevant effects in the experience activity

Although outstanding one's status and identity is not a critical factor in experiencing life craft products, it is an effect worth attending since aesthetic experience could bring about unique style and taste as well as reflect the consumer's individual values.

(6) Duplicating experience

A successful experience model should be able to rise consumers' curiosity and sensual pleasure, and it is also demanded in packaging the product with a storyline. Among the four aesthetic experience factors in the multiple regression analysis, however, act is the most crucial. A business manager should devote himself to rise consumers' potential energy so as to shift their emotion into actual action. For instance, small duplicated products could be developed from the authentic master piece, so that there is a flexible distinction between the products' price range and thus provides consumers the possibility to enjoy immediate possession within their financial ability. This way, experiences could be duplicated, memory extended, better product circulation achieved, and more influential the products to the society.

7 Conclusion

Taiwan is now entering a new era of culture creatives followed by aesthetic economy; with the pursuit of culture creatives, a new group of consumers, titled the LOHAS by

Anderson and Ray, is now newly coming into existence. The LOHAS, in addition to topics of organics, environmental conservation and health, heeds more to the integration of body, mind and spirit. [14] As culture seeks after emotional inspiration towards life, and aesthetic economy stresses the actual experience of life, the LOHAS consumption emphasizes exploration of life values. A good product is a craft which carries discourse with people by brings inspiration to them. As Norman states, emotion is the ultimate critical issue of a successful product design. [10] The strongest power which can touch people originates from the reflection of each person's life experiences, the objective condition—is actually the sensual responses the product induces—. Consequently, a successful cultural creative industry would be one that allows consumers to actively take part in the process, and duplicate, extend, as well as enlarge the experience activities and results. This is undoubtedly also the direction and goals to which each craft product designer, and business managers, when promoting life craft aesthetic experiences and developing creative life industry, should make their best efforts for.

Acknowledgment. This study was partly sponsored with a grant, NSC97-2410-H-144-008, from the National Science Council, Taiwan.

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