

Cultural Symbols at Risk: Misinterpretation and Design Strategies in Packaging

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ABSTRACT

In packaging design, the application of traditional cultural symbols is widespread, yet misreading and misuse of these symbols are increasingly prevalent, leading to cultural distortion and stereotypes. Existing research lacks interdisciplinary integration and fails to fully address the negative impacts of symbol misapplication. This study aims to analyze the limitations of current research, propose an interdisciplinary framework, and develop strategies to balance cultural authenticity with design innovation in symbol application. An in-depth analysis of 14 core studies from the Web of Science database was conducted, examining research methods, objects, theoretical applications, and conclusions. Three key limitations were identified: (1) overreliance on a single research method, (2) excessive focus on symbol application while neglecting the relationship between misreading phenomena and cultural contexts, and (3) lack of cohesive theoretical integration. This study proposes a three-dimensional "application-misreading-optimization" framework, combining semiotics, cultural capital theory, and brand narrative theory. The research contributes by advancing packaging design from a functional carrier to a cultural medium, enriching design semiotics theory, and offering practical strategies to mitigate symbol misreading. This supports traditional culture's innovative transformation and global dissemination in contemporary design.

Contribution/Originality: This constructs a three-dimensional framework of "application misreading optimization", innovates interdisciplinary theoretical integration, fills the gap in symbolic misreading research, proposes a strategy for balancing cultural authenticity and design innovation, and promotes the theoretical development and practical application of design semiotics.

1. Introduction

As globalization accelerates and consumer culture becomes increasingly diverse, packaging design has evolved beyond its basic functions of protecting goods and conveying information. Today, it serves as a vital medium for expressing brand culture and creating emotional connections with consumers.

Within this context, traditional cultural symbols have become popular design elements. Their rich cultural meanings and distinct visual characteristics help enhance brand identity and increase competitiveness, especially in culturally nuanced markets. However, the use of these symbols involves complex interdisciplinary factors—including semiotics, psychology, communication, and cultural studies—that remain underexplored in current research.

Most academic studies on traditional cultural symbols in packaging adopt a singular theoretical approach. For example, semiotic analyses often focus on direct translation and hidden cultural meanings (Su & Naeim, 2024; Zong et al., 2023). Studies in consumer behavior examine how traditional symbols influence perception, customer attitudes, and purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, brand narrative research highlights how packaging communicates cultural identity and storytelling (Yuan, 2023).

These foundational theories provide critical insights into traditional cultural symbols' roles; however, several limitations arise from a lack of comprehensive analysis of potential misreading, distortions, and abuses of these symbols in cross-cultural contexts.

Research has shown that some traditional symbols may be oversimplified or misrepresented due to designers' narrow interpretations or commercial motivations, leading to a dilution of cultural significance (Xu, 2023). This simplification can incite cultural discontent and skew consumers' perceptions of brands, yet systematic theoretical analysis and empirical studies on these phenomena are sparse. Furthermore, the contemporary application of traditional symbols entails addressing multifaceted challenges such as semantic reconstruction, the conversion of cultural capital, designing for emotional experiences, and developing brand narratives. A singular disciplinary perspective insufficiently captures these complexities. For example, Bourdieu's Cultural Capital Theory provides valuable lenses to analyze how the cultural significance of symbols translates into commercial capital (Sari et al., 2023). At the same time, Emotional Design Theory elucidates how symbols incite emotional engagement in consumers, while Brand Narrative Theory delineates the symbols' roles in storytelling strategies (Yijing & Sharudin, 2023; Yu & Ghazali, 2023). To address these gaps, this study proposes an interdisciplinary approach that combines semiotics, cultural capital theory, emotional design theory, and brand narrative theory. The goal is to build a comprehensive framework for understanding how traditional symbols are used, misused, and optimized in modern packaging design. This integration aims to enrich academic theory and offer practical guidance for culturally sensitive and innovative design strategies.

1.2. Research Question

- i. What are the limitations of existing single-discipline theories in analyzing the misinterpretation of traditional cultural symbols? How to build a more comprehensive analytical framework through interdisciplinary methods?

- ii. Are there significant differences in the misinterpretation of traditional symbols in packaging design by consumers from different cultural backgrounds? What are the influencing factors?
- iii. How do semiotics with cultural capital theory analyze the misinterpretation and abuse mechanism of traditional symbols in packaging design?

1.3. Research Objectives

- i. To comprehensively analyze the application logic and causes of misunderstanding of traditional cultural symbols in packaging design.
- ii. Analyze the manifestations and deep-seated reasons for the misinterpretation or abuse of traditional cultural symbols in packaging design.
- iii. Examine the differences in the interpretation of traditional symbols by consumers from different cultural backgrounds and clarify the key factors leading to misunderstanding.

1.4. Research Significance

This study significantly advances packaging design research by constructing a multidimensional theoretical framework through the integration of semiotics, cultural capital theory, emotional design theory, and brand narrative theory, thereby addressing the limitations of single-discipline approaches and enhancing the systematic analysis of traditional cultural symbols in design applications. Firstly, it expands the academic discourse on cultural symbols by critically examining prevalent issues of semantic misreading and misuse in cross-cultural communication, thereby bridging research gaps and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue between packaging semiotics and cultural communication studies. Secondly, the research innovates methodology through hybrid approaches that combine semiotic analysis with empirical consumer behavior experiments, offering a replicable model for interdisciplinary design-cultural studies. Collectively, these contributions not only deepen theoretical understandings of symbolic alienation and cultural capital transformation but also provide practical methodological tools for optimizing the cultural authenticity and communicative efficacy of packaging designs in globalized contexts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Interpretation and strategic integration of traditional cultural symbols from a semiotic perspective

In modern packaging design, traditional cultural symbols are frequently used, and their core purpose is to shape the brand image by improving the cultural quality and connotation of the product. However, the use of symbols is not random, and semiotics theory provides an important analytical tool for interpreting the connotation of symbols in packaging design. Semiotics emphasizes the relationship between the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning) of a symbol, helping designers and researchers to test the rationality of the use of symbols and explore whether there are cultural misunderstandings or ethical issues (Stawarska, 2020).

2.1.1. Traditional cultural symbols and semiotic

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation, which allows for the exploration of the relationship between the signifier (i.e., physical representation) and the signified (i.e., the attached meaning). Designers must navigate the nuances of cultural symbols to avoid oversimplifications that could lead to misunderstandings or conflicts. For example, Brands often use cultural references to cultivate consumers' ethnic identity, emphasizing that such use must be rooted in authentic representations rather than superficial engagement with cultural elements.

Traditional symbols have deep cultural significance, embodying the narrative and values of their origins. Experts discuss the importance of incorporating traditional symbols into modern product design to promote cultural inheritance and innovation (Yijing & Sharudin, 2023). In addition, Yu and Ghazali (2023) illustrate how Chinese calligraphy is an important tool for cultural communication in packaging design, arguing that these symbols are not only crucial for conveying information but also for cultivating the identity of creative products. These perspectives emphasize the importance of culturally resonant symbols in branding, highlighting the need for designers to interact with cultural context and inherent meaning to effectively utilize symbols.

2.1.2. Misreading and abuse of traditional cultural symbols

Currently, the misinterpretation and abuse of traditional cultural symbols are relatively common. For example, some brands may use traditional symbols casually in pursuit of a "cultural sense", but ignore the deeper cultural meaning behind the symbols, which may even cause cultural conflicts or misunderstandings. As some study observed, misuse may lead to cultural conflicts. They pointed out that traditional elements can evoke national pride and identity, but if they are misunderstood or distorted, they may also alienate the audience (Gao et al., 2023). The misuse of cultural symbols has the potential to fall into the realm of "empty" symbolism, that is, superficial interpretations dominate, undermining the richness and heritage represented by these symbols.

Liu and Zhao (2024) further note that traditional cultural symbols significantly influence consumer behavior and identity, emphasizing the need for brands to cultivate authentic connections through cultural representations in product design. In addition, research shows that consumer attitudes toward brands can change dramatically depending on the authenticity and accuracy of the cultural symbols presented. The synergy between form and meaning embodies the semiotic process and emphasizes the designer's responsibility to ensure that the cultural symbols used in packaging resonate authentically with the target audience.

2.1.3. Strategic integration of traditional cultural symbols

In contemporary packaging design, the strategic integration of traditional cultural symbols helps to enhance cultural significance and brand image, a process closely related to semiotic analysis. By following the semiotic framework, designers can enhance product appeal while respecting the significance of the cultural narrative embedded in traditional symbols. Semiotic theory provides an in-depth analytical framework for these phenomena, helping designers pay more attention to the cultural context and symbolic meaning of symbols when using traditional symbols, and avoid superficial or "empty" use of symbols.

In conclusion, the integration of traditional cultural symbols in packaging design requires a comprehensive semiotic analysis to explain the cultural nuances and meanings. The continued misuse and misunderstanding of these symbols require a re-evaluation of design practices to ensure that they contribute to rather than detract from authentic cultural expressions. By combining semiotic theory, consumer behavior theory, and other related theories, designers can more effectively utilize traditional symbols to enhance the cultural communication effect of packaging design while respecting and inheriting cultural traditions.

2.2. The multi-dimensional interactive relationship between traditional symbols and consumer behavior

The use of traditional symbols in packaging design is not only about cultural expression but also directly affects consumers' purchasing decisions. Consumer behavior theory reveals the complexity of this process, pointing out that traditional symbols shape consumer behavior through three paths: perception, cognition, and emotion. This interactive process is closely related to cultural identity, psychological mechanisms, and market strategies, forming a multi-level consumption-driving mechanism.

2.2.1. The perceptual and emotional impact of traditional symbols on consumer decisions

Consumers' perception of packaging symbols is mainly achieved through sensory channels such as vision and touch, while traditional symbols can trigger deeper psychological reactions due to their cultural attributes. For example, Cultural identity and emotional attachment. [Grisaffe and Nguyen \(2011\)](#) pointed out that traditional symbols can evoke consumers' connection with their personal or collective cultural identity, thereby establishing an emotional attachment to the brand. This attachment is not based solely on functional needs but stems from the consistency between the cultural narrative behind the symbol and the consumer's self-concept ([Malar et al., 2011](#)). Immediate emotional response. [Yan et al. \(2024\)](#) research shows that traditional visual symbols (such as calligraphy and totems) can directly trigger consumers' emotional reactions, thereby affecting purchase intentions and brand loyalty. For example, Chinese consumers' positive reactions to calligraphy elements are often related to national pride.

2.2.2. Dynamics of symbolic meaning decoding

Consumers' interpretation of traditional symbols is a dynamic process of meaning construction, shaped by cultural background, personal experience, market environment, and symbolic context. [Zong et al. \(2023\)](#) found that when purchasing products with regional cultural symbols (e.g., traditional handicrafts), consumers often prioritize symbolic "authenticity," with value judgments extending beyond functionality to reflect cultural belonging. Similarly, [Liu and Zhao \(2024\)](#) highlighted that symbolic meanings vary across markets—for instance, dragon motifs signify authority in East Asia but may carry negative connotations in the West, necessitating strategic contextual design (e.g., explanatory narratives) to guide accurate consumer decoding.

2.2.3. Practical enlightenment of brand strategy

Based on consumer behavior theory, relevant experts put forward their views on the use of traditional symbols by brands. Experts pointed out that we should avoid using symbols superficially: designs that only pursue aesthetics while ignoring cultural connotations may lead to "symbol hollowing" and even cause cultural conflicts. For example, the misuse of Indian totems by an international brand has triggered protests from indigenous groups. Strengthen the consistency between symbols and identity and help consumers establish a "brand-self" connection through symbolic narratives (such as cultural story labels on packaging). For example, the tea brand "Xiao Guan Tea" combines traditional landscape painting symbols with modern design while marking the intangible cultural heritage craft background, successfully activating consumers' cultural identity (Yijing & Sharudin, 2023).

2.3. Application of the actor model in packaging design

Greimas' (1984) Actor Model offers a robust framework for analyzing traditional cultural symbols within packaging design, extending its application from narrative structures to brand storytelling and consumer interaction. The model facilitates a nuanced understanding of how packaging communicates cultural messages by delineating the relationships between different actors involved in the consumer decision-making process. This is particularly relevant in the realm of packaging design where traditional symbols can be conceptualized as "actors," while consumer perception and purchasing behavior represent the "actions" driven by these actors.

In the context of Greimas' (1984) six core elements—Sender, Receiver, Subject, Object, Helper, and Opponent—packaging design can effectively employ traditional symbols as "senders" of cultural information aimed at "receivers," who are the consumers. Taghavi and Seyedsalehi (2015) underscores that visual elements in packaging significantly impact consumer choices, emphasizing that the design of packaging is pivotal in shaping consumer judgment. Additionally, the consequential role of symbolic names and meanings indicates that the symbolic value of packaging can enhance consumer desire and intention to purchase, thus supporting the identification of traditional symbols as critical elements affecting consumer behavior (Ampa-Korsah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Zong et al. (2023) explore how traditional cultural symbols influence purchase intentions in the context of cultural objects, suggesting that the conveyance of cultural significance through packaging can serve as an effective strategy to tap into consumers' cultural narratives and identities. Similarly, research has shown that the strategic use of religious symbols that the strategic use of religious symbols within packaging can elevate consumer purchase intentions in specific markets, further substantiating the role of symbolic communication in driving consumer action (Akbari et al., 2018).

Employing Greimas' (1984) actor model, one can view consumers' cultural identity and emotional resonance as "helpers" that bolster the effectiveness of traditional symbols in packaging design. This perspective aligns with the insights from Kwak and Kang (2009), who discuss how consumers are motivated to make purchases based on the symbolic significance attached to products, linking consumer self-image to the perceived quality of items associated with traditional symbols.

In sum, utilizing Greimas' (1984) actor Model in packaging design enables brands to strategically integrate traditional symbols, thereby enhancing the cultural communication effect through a dynamic interaction characterized by the roles of senders (symbols), receivers (consumers), and helpers (cultural identity). This coherent approach ultimately aims to foster deeper consumer engagement and drive purchasing behavior.

2.4. Supplementary analysis of other theories in packaging design

Several theories beyond semiotics, consumer behavior theory, and Greimas' (1984) actor model can help analyze traditional symbols in packaging design. Three notable supplementary frameworks—Cultural Capital Theory, Emotional Design Theory, and Brand Narrative Theory—contribute valuable perspectives on how traditional symbols function within packaging to enhance consumer connections and drive purchasing behavior.

Cultural Capital Theory, posited by Pierre Bourdieu, articulates that cultural symbols serve as forms of capital that can influence social status and identity. In the context of packaging design, the integration of traditional symbols can enhance a product's cultural capital, thereby appealing to consumer demographics with specific cultural backgrounds. Related studies emphasize the need for brand managers to understand their target consumers' culture, arguing that integrating culturally resonant symbols into branding can fortify brand authenticity (Fritz et al., 2017). This fusion not only attracts consumers but also enriches their social identity through the symbolic representation of cultural heritage in product design.

Emotional Design Theory, articulated by Donald Norman, highlights the significance of emotional responses stimulated by design elements such as sensory experiences. Traditional symbols, imbued with deep cultural meanings, often evoke strong emotional resonance among consumers, enhancing their connection to the product. Tangsupwattana and Liu (2018) elucidates how emotional experiences can significantly impact consumer behavior, particularly within the realm of symbolic consumption. In their findings, they argue that products designed with emotional considerations can foster deeper patronage and loyalty among consumers, as these symbols bridge consumers' ideal self-concept to their purchasing decisions.

Brand Narrative Theory revolves around the idea that brands can forge emotional bonds with consumers through storytelling and symbolism. Effective packaging design that utilizes traditional symbols can serve as a rich narrative tool, providing a conduit for brand storytelling. Hirschman (2010) discusses the structural consistency between traditional brand narratives and narratives consumers construct about their own identities, positing that strong brand stories create connections based on shared values and cultural resonance. The research of Jian et al. (2019) indicates that cultural symbolism in brands reinforces authenticity and can enhance consumer well-being by aligning products with consumers' values and identities.

Combining these theories illustrates how traditional symbols in packaging design function not only as aesthetic choices but also as essential elements that influence consumer perceptions, identities, and experiences. By harnessing cultural capital, evoking emotional responses, and crafting compelling narratives, brands can

significantly enhance the communicative efficacy of their packaging design, ultimately leading to stronger consumer engagement and increased purchase intentions.

2.5. Research gaps

The application of traditional cultural symbols in modern packaging design is a complex process involving multiple disciplines such as semiotics, psychology, and communication. Current research mainly focuses on a single theoretical perspective, such as semiotics analyzing the surface meaning and cultural connotation of symbols, consumer behavior theory exploring the impact of symbols on consumer cognition or Greimas' (1984) Actor Model analyzing the cultural narrative function of packaging design. However, the existing literature has obvious theoretical limitations: first, multidisciplinary research is fragmented and lacks systematic integration; second, there is insufficient attention to the misinterpretation and abuse of traditional cultural symbols in packaging design, and a complete theoretical analysis framework has not yet been established.

Future research urgently needs to build an interdisciplinary theoretical system and include cultural capital theory, emotional design theory, and brand narrative theory in the scope of analysis. This theoretical integration can not only deepen the critical research on the phenomenon of symbol misreading but also provide methodological support for the innovative application of traditional cultural symbols. With the development of design disciplines, the modern translation of traditional cultural symbols will face multiple challenges such as symbol semantic reconstruction and cultural identity establishment but will also gain a broader space for expression. Through the coordination of multidisciplinary theories, packaging design is expected to achieve a paradigm upgrade from functional carrier to cultural medium and promote the industry to develop in a direction with greater cultural depth and innovation.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Theoretical framework

3.1.1 Semiotics Theory

This study constructs a three-dimensional analysis framework of "application-misinterpretation-optimization" to systematically examine existing literature and analyze the characteristics of current research in terms of method application, step design, and theoretical application, thereby revealing the limitations of traditional cultural symbol packaging design research. Through three mutually supporting dimensions, this framework forms a complete research paradigm from literature analysis to problem diagnosis to theoretical innovation.

In the application dimension (basic layer), the study focuses on the research methods of existing literature on the status of the application of traditional cultural symbols. Through the analytical perspective of the semiotic signifier/signified theory, the research paths on the symbol selection mechanism, expression form, and functional positioning in the literature are systematically sorted out, and the effectiveness of different research methods in revealing the correspondence between the surface form of symbols and cultural connotations is evaluated (Diniarta Nur et al., 2024). The analysis

of this dimension focuses on whether the literature adopts an interdisciplinary research perspective and the integrity of its methodological system.

In the misreading dimension (diagnostic level), the study focuses on the theoretical explanatory framework of the existing literature on the phenomenon of symbol distortion. By integrating multiple disciplinary perspectives such as consumer behavior theory, Greimas' (1984) Actor Model, and cultural capital theory, the theoretical tools and research steps used in the literature are deeply analyzed to evaluate their explanatory power in explaining the cognitive mechanism, contextual influence, and power factors of symbol misreading. The core task of this dimension is to discover the limitations of the current literature in theoretical application, especially the lack of cross-disciplinary theoretical integration (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Feng & Hu, 2019).

In the optimization dimension (intervention layer), the study systematically evaluates the theoretical basis of the improvement strategies proposed in the literature. The focus is on analyzing whether the literature effectively integrates brand narrative theory and emotional design methods, whether a quantifiable evaluation system has been established, and whether its research steps are repeatable and verifiable. Through the investigation of this dimension, the shortcomings of existing research in theoretical innovation and methodological breakthroughs can be clarified (Lim & Childs, 2020; Paharia et al., 2010).

The innovation of this theoretical framework is mainly reflected in the following aspects: first, a systematic literature analysis tool is established to comprehensively evaluate the research methods, procedures, and theoretical applications; second, through multi-dimensional cross-validation, the theoretical blind spots and methodological limitations of the research field can be accurately identified; finally, it points out the possible path of theoretical breakthroughs and methodological innovation for subsequent research. This framework not only helps to clarify the contributions and shortcomings of existing research but also provides methodological guidance for future research.

3.2. Research design

This study uses bibliometrics, with "semiotics", "Package", and "Traditional symbol" as the keywords, to search the Web of Science (WOS) database, initially screening out 22 relevant documents, and finally focusing on 14 documents for in-depth analysis. The research design is divided into the following three main steps: According to the research topic, select the literature focusing on the application of traditional symbols in packaging design and its misreading and abuse problems to ensure that the content of the literature is highly consistent with the research objectives. The screening criteria include the academic relevance of the literature, the depth of research, and the pertinence of the topic. The literature is systematically sorted out and compared from four dimensions: research methods, research objects, theoretical applications, and research results. Through multidimensional analysis of the literature, the similarities and differences in methodology, theoretical framework, and practical application of different studies are revealed, providing theoretical support for subsequent research. This study uses the three-dimensional framework of "application-misinterpretation-optimization" to systematically analyze existing literature. First, relevant research data from the past decade is collected and sorted, focusing on the research objects and theoretical applications. In the application dimension, the design context differences of

traditional symbols in the literature are analyzed, and the corresponding relationship between symbol form and meaning is examined. In the misinterpretation dimension, misinterpretation patterns are identified, and the integrity of existing theoretical explanations is evaluated. In the optimization dimension, the solutions proposed in the literature are tested.

Through the above steps, this study aims to systematically sort out the current application status of traditional symbols in packaging design, reveal the deep reasons for their misreading and abuse, and provide a theoretical basis and practical guidance for future design practice.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

This study uses a combination of descriptive statistics and semiotic text analysis to systematically collect and analyze data from 14 semiotic literatures on packaging design. In the data collection stage, the core variables in the literature were extracted through manual coding, including the type of research method (such as case study, experimental method, questionnaire survey, content analysis, etc.), the industry to which the research object belongs (food, cosmetics, alcohol, etc.), cultural background (East Asia, Europe and the United States, not marked, etc.), semiotic theoretical framework ([Barthes, 1972](#); [Peirce, 1994](#), etc.) and the type of practical suggestions for the research conclusions (cultural protection, design training, cross-cultural strategy, etc.).

In the data analysis stage, we first use Excel to perform frequency statistics and cross-analysis to calculate the distribution ratio and correlation of each variable, such as statistically analyzing the application preferences of different industries for visual symbols (patterns, colors, shapes), or the proportion of research with a clear cultural background. Then, we use Photoshop to generate visual charts (such as ring charts to present the distribution of theoretical applications, and stacked bar charts to show the correspondence between industries and symbol types) to intuitively present data patterns. Semiotic text analysis focuses on the correspondence between the signifiers (such as dragon patterns, calligraphy fonts) and the signifieds (auspicious meanings, regional identities) of traditional symbols in the literature, and combines [Barthes'\(1972\)](#) "myth" theory to analyze how the meaning of symbols is reconstructed in the business context.

4. Results

4.1. Analysis

The analysis focuses on the specific content of 14 articles, and conducts a comprehensive discussion from four dimensions: research methods, research objects, theoretical applications, and research results; combined with the theoretical framework of "application-misinterpretation-optimization", the research steps are deeply analyzed, aiming to reveal the research characteristics of current literature, including its advantages and disadvantages, to provide a clear direction for theoretical research and practical guidance. Based on the analysis results, the development path of future research will be further proposed, including the optimization of methodology, the improvement of theoretical framework, and the innovation of practical application, to promote the in-depth research and effective application of traditional symbols in the field of packaging design (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1: List of 14 articles

Article	Objective	Method And Theory	Key Finding	Gaps	Critical viewpoint
Han & Kang (2014)	To examine whether Barthes's (1972) semiotics can be applied to analyze the design meanings of Korean milk packaging (standard & fat-free).	Qualitative analysis- Barthes's (1972) semiotics	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Korean milk packaging communicates multiple meanings to consumers through design. 2. Barthes's (1972) semiotics is an effective tool for decoding visual signs in packaging. 3. Highlights the importance of internal meanings in design and the need for brand-consumer interaction. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited to three brands—broader market analysis needed. 2. Does not explore consumer perception (only design-side interpretation). 3. Potential cultural specificity (Barthes', 1972 Western framework applied to Korean context). 	The fixed meanings of the "pure" and "traditional" symbols in milk packaging have overlooked the diverse interpretations of these symbols among different consumer groups.
2. Lee Mi-jin & Jeon (2018)	To analyze how luxury fashion brands (e.g., YSL, Armani) transfer their brand identity to cosmetics through packaging design and visual semiotics.	Qualitative analysis-Visual semiotic theory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. YSL does not fully transfer its fashion brand identity to cosmetics. 2. Armani successfully communicates its fashion identity (Baroque style) in cosmetics through visual strategies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited to two brands (YSL, Armani); broader luxury/Korean brand expansion needs examination. 2. Requires deeper analysis on how fashion identities can be better applied to cosmetics branding strategies. 	The practice of simplifying the symbolic meanings of classicism and Baroque styles, yet these styles have diverse expressions in different cultures.
3. Hae (2024)	To analyze "Temple of Ungnyeo" café as a case of transmedia storytelling (based on the Dangun myth) and examine its semiotic marketing impact for	Qualitative analysis- Semiotic theory, mythological	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on mythological motifs (bear transformation, Shindansu tree) and ritualistic consumer engagement. The cafe demythologized the Dangun myth while creating 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited to one case study—needs comparison with other myth-based marketing. 2. No empirical data on consumer perception (only semiotic interpretation). 3. Unclear long-term effectiveness of 	The deep meaning and historical evolution of symbols in the myth of Tan Jun are not reflected in coffee products.

	Missha cosmetics.		new mythological meanings tied to beauty transformation (aligning with Missha’s mugwort cosmetics). 2.Used hero-narrative structure (bear transformation) to enhance engagement. 3.Established a ritual-like experience, reinforcing brand themes even after the cafe’s closure. 1. The bridal industry repackages patriarchal norms under the guise of consumer empowerment and luxury. 2. Despite appearing empowered through lavish consumption, Chinese brides remain constrained by traditional gender roles in marriage. 3. The industry normalizes heteronormative matrimony while reinforcing women’s subordinate status.	mythological storytelling in cosmetics branding.	
4. Luo (2012)	To analyze how Chinese bridal media constructs images of brides and reinforces gender norms through consumerist wedding culture, using semiotic analysis of bridal magazines.	Qualitative analysis- Semiotic theory		1. Focuses primarily on magazines—could expand to digital bridal media (social media, ads). 2. Lacks audience reception analysis (how real brides interpret these images). 3. Does not explore class differences in wedding consumption.	The existence of traditional ritual symbols in Chinese wedding culture varies in different regions and cultures.
5. Elizabeth et al. (2014)	To examine how consumers in Spain (Mediterranean) and	Qualitative analysis (Word association, free	1. Symbol interpretation was culturally influenced but conceptually similar	1. Limited to two European countries needs a broader cultural comparison 2. Small symbol set may not	The perception of health-related label symbols varies among different consumers

	<p>Denmark (Scandinavian) perceive health-related symbols on food packaging and their influence on product appeal and convincingness.</p>	<p>listing, conjoint analysis)- Semiotic</p>	<p>across countries 2. Visual symbols had greater impact than verbal claims 3. Culture shaped specific connotations of symbols</p>	<p>represent the full range of health imagery 3. No longitudinal data on actual purchasing behavior 4. Doesn't account for individual differences in health literacy</p>	
<p>6. Celhay & Remaud (2018)</p>	<p>To examine how package design semiotics influence consumer perceptions in the Bordeaux wine category and assess the reliability of semiotic analysis for brand communication.</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis- Semiotic and content analysis, Empirical validation</p>	<p>1. Semiotic analysis effectively predicts consumer associations triggered by package design 2. Design-triggered associations remain consistent across gender, age, and expertise levels 3. Semiotics identifies specific visual attributes that produce desired brand meanings</p>	<p>1. Limited to French consumers (cultural specificity) 2. Focuses only on Bordeaux wines (category-specific findings) 3. Lacks cross-cultural comparison of semiotic interpretations 4. Doesn't address long-term brand perception effects</p>	<p>The visual symbols of Bordeaux wine labels have an impact on consumers in actual consumption scenarios.</p>
<p>7. Du & Park (2022)</p>	<p>To analyze how naturalistic cosmetics packaging communicates brand value through semiotics, focusing on design elements that enhance consumer appeal and differentiation.</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis (Case study)-Semiotic theory, five visual design perspectives</p>	<p>1. Naturalistic design elements effectively convey brand identity and differentiation 2. Symbolic packaging creates emotional connections with consumers 3. Simplification and clarity align with current consumer</p>	<p>1. Limited to Korean brands (cultural specificity) 2. Small sample size (five brands, two analyzed in-depth) 3. Lacks consumer perception data beyond awards 4. Doesn't address cross-category applicability</p>	<p>The natural element symbols in cosmetic packaging lack innovative expression of modern design.</p>

<p>8. Kong (2015)</p>	<p>To analyze how snack package design elements communicate meaning and influence consumer perception using Barthes' (1972) semiotics.</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis- Barthes' methodology</p>	<p>preferences 1. Packaging creates myths conveying: traditionality, reliability, uniqueness, and fun 2. These myths effectively communicate product characteristics, Signal social status, Drive purchase decisions 3. Design elements work synergistically for immediate consumer appeal</p>	<p>1. Limited to snack packaging (category-specific) 2. No consumer testing to validate interpretations 3. Lacks cross-cultural comparison 4. Doesn't address evolving design trends</p>	<p>The innovative expression of traditional craft symbols in modern design is insufficient.</p>
<p>9. Liu & Nah (2021)</p>	<p>To analyze the cultural symbolism and design attributes of traditional water patterns in Korean and Chinese packaging design using semiotic theory.</p>	<p>Qualitative analysis (Comparative case study)- Semiotic theory</p>	<p>1. Traditional water patterns carry cultural symbolism but are often used rather than abstractly 2. Current packaging designs: Over-rely on **direct pattern replication, Lack of symbolic refinement** and innovation 3. Digital design tools have diminished traditional craftsmanship in pattern application</p>	<p>1. Limited to water patterns (other traditional motifs not examined) 2. No consumer perception research on symbolic interpretations 3. Lacks guidelines for effective traditional pattern modernization 4. Doesn't address industry adoption barriers</p>	<p>Comparing the water patterns in packaging design between Korea and China, and exploring their deep cultural connotations is suggested.</p>
<p>10. Arboleda Arango (2008)</p>	<p>To examine how consumers interpret package colors and shapes based on their product experiences</p>	<p>Qualitative exploratory approach using focus groups - Semiotic theory</p>	<p>1. Consumers rely on category-specific visual codes (colors/shapes) for: Product recognition, Quality assessment, Utility</p>	<p>1. Limited to qualitative data (needs quantitative validation) 2. No cross-cultural comparison 3. Doesn't examine emerging package design trends</p>	<p>Consumers' perception of packaging color and shape varies due to cultural differences.</p>

	and identify expectations for effective package design.		understanding 2. Breaking category norms requires additional consumer education 1. Modern character designs: Transcend decorative function to embody brand identity, effectively communicate product features through visual cues 2. Baby animal characters successfully convey: Product purity/naturalness, Brand values through packaging aesthetics 1. Packaging functions as a cultural value transmitter through strategic symbol recombination, element innovation (materials/colors/graphics) 2. Designers manipulate symbols to encode product meanings, enhance cultural resonance	4. Lacks neuromarketing/eye-tracking validation 1. Limited to award-winning designs (selection bias) 2. No consumer perception data 3. Lacks cross-cultural comparison 4. Doesn't address non-character-based eco-designs	
11. Min & Lee (2014)	To analyze the symbolic meanings of character-based packaging designs in award-winning eco-friendly cosmetics brands using Peirce's (1994) semiotic model.	Qualitative analysis- Peirce's (1994) Triadic Model, character design types			The traditional symbols in eco-friendly cosmetics packaging have a weak correlation with the brand's environmental protection concept.
12. Yang & Dong (2009)	To analyze the application of symbol propagation in packaging design and examine its variable factors through semiotic theory.	Qualitative analysis- Semiotic theory, symbol propagation		1. Lacks empirical validation of propagation effectiveness 2. No cross-cultural comparison of symbol interpretation 3. Doesn't address digital packaging adaptations 4. Omits consumer decoding processes	The theoretical framework of symbolic communication semantics in packaging design lacks relevance to brand value. The correlation between symbol and brand environmental protection concept is weak.
13. Moon & Um (2018)	To analyze the evolving package design of Korean fruit liqueurs ("Sunhari-Yuja" and "Jamonge-isul") using Barthes' (1972)	Quantitative analysis- Barthes's semiotics, design evolution, and	1. Package redesigns altered product connotations, Brand myths 2. Effective designs require strategic sign-marketing alignment, conscious	1. Limited to two brands (Korean market only) 2. No consumer perception data 3. Lacks sales impact analysis 4. Doesn't compare male-targeted liqueur packaging	This paper analyzes the traditional custom symbols in the packaging of Valentine's Day promotional products and points out their functional deficiencies.

<p>14. Cho (2010)</p>	<p>semiotics, assessing alignment with marketing concepts.</p> <p>To analyze the sender-receiver communication dynamics in ramen package design using Greimas' (1984) Actor Model, focusing on how packaging stimulates purchase decisions.</p>	<p>myth construction</p> <p>Mixed analysis-Semiotic theory, Greimas' (1984) Actor Mode</p>	<p>**myth construction.</p> <p>1. Package designs create a marketing narrative where brands (senders) transmit product concepts, consumers (receivers) seek to fulfill needs, and products act as assistants/obstacles in decision-making</p> <p>2. Effective designs combine structural appeal, sender conviction, and need-fulfillment signaling.</p>	<p>1. Limited to three Korean brands</p> <p>2. No cross-cultural validation</p> <p>3. Lacks eye-tracking/neuromarketing data</p> <p>4. Doesn't examine digital packaging variants</p>	<p>Criticized the shortcomings of traditional architectural symbols in packaging functionality.</p>
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4.1.1. Analysis of Research Methods

In the current research, qualitative research methods dominate (12 articles, 85.71%), indicating that researchers pay more attention to the exploration of social and cultural phenomena and the deep meanings of traditional symbols in packaging design. Qualitative research primarily employs case analysis and semiotics theory to offer a deep interpretation of symbols in packaging design, revealing the multiple meanings of symbols and their role in cultural communication. Qualitative methods can provide a deep exploration of the cultural connotations, design contexts, and user experiences of symbols, making them suitable for exploratory research. However, quantitative research (1 article, 7.14%) and mixed methods research (1 article, 7.14%) are less frequently used, which may limit the universality and scientific validity of the research conclusions. Quantitative research uses joint analysis and free enumeration methods to analyze consumers' preferences and association patterns for symbols through statistical methods, providing data support for brand design. Mixed research combines content analysis with free vocabulary association tasks, and through the complementarity of quantitative and qualitative methods, comprehensively explores the use patterns of symbols in packaging design and their impact on consumer perception. The lack of quantitative methods makes it difficult to verify the findings through data. At the same time, the shortcomings of mixed research weaken the comprehensiveness and multidimensional perspective of the research. [Table 2](#) provides a detailed summary of the research methods and approaches used in 14 articles. These methods not only provide rich theoretical support for packaging design research but also offer a scientific basis for optimizing design practice and brand strategy.

Table 2: Research methods used in the 14 articles

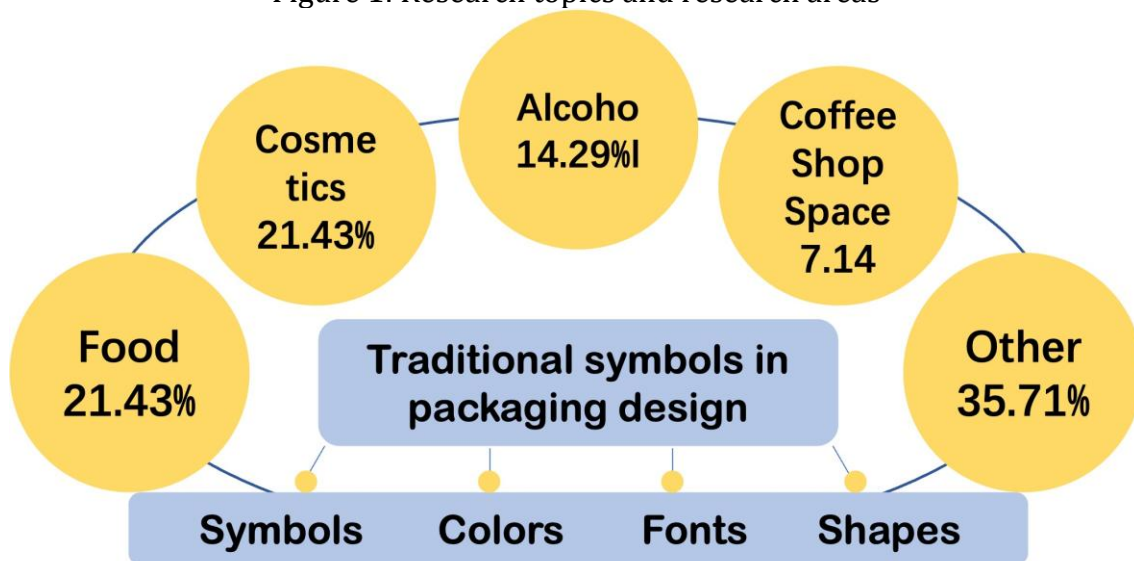
Method	Method	Source	Percentages
Qualitative research	Case analysis	Han & Kang (2014), Lee Mi-jin & Jeon (2018), Hae (2024), Luo (2012), Elizabeth et al. (2014), Celhay & Remaud (2018), Du & Park (2022), Kong (2015), Liu & Nah (2021), Arboleda Arango (2008), Min & Lee (2014), Yang & Dong (2009)	85.71%
	Semiotics theory analysis case, Compares the traditional symbol		
Quantitative research	Conjoint Analysis (Design experiments and analyze them using SPSS software;) Free Listing (Design tasks, record and analyze associative vocabulary)	Moon & Um (2018)	7.14%
Mix research	Content Analysis (Describe characteristics such as type, color, shape, encoded data, and count frequency)	Cho (2010)	7.14%

Free-word-association Task
 (Record consumers' associative
 vocabulary and analyze
 associative patterns)

4.1.2. Analysis of Research Subjects

Figure 1 illustrates that through the combination and analysis of 14 research articles, it can be found that these studies mainly focus on visual symbols in packaging design (such as patterns, colors, fonts, shapes, etc.), and all articles (100%) involve this topic. In terms of distribution in specific fields, food and cosmetics fields each accounted for 21.43% (3 articles each), alcohol field accounted for 14.29% (2 articles), cafe space design accounted for 7.14% (1 article), and other fields (such as wedding media, health labels, etc.) accounted for 35.71% (5 articles). These articles provide rich case studies for the study of the misreading and abuse of traditional symbols. Research in the field of food reveals the misreading and abuse of symbols in daily necessities; research in the field of cosmetics shows the commercial abuse of symbols in luxury goods; research in the field of alcohol explores the changes in the cultural meaning of symbols in high-end consumer goods; research on cafe space design shows the misreading and abuse of symbols in cross-media narratives. These diverse cases provide an important empirical basis for a deeper understanding of the misreading and abuse of symbols.

Figure 1: Research topics and research areas



The study found that cultural background is the key factor that leads to the misinterpretation and abuse of traditional cultural symbols in packaging design. Its influence is mainly reflected in three aspects: first, cultural background determines the original meaning and design logic of the symbol; second, consumers from different cultural backgrounds have significant differences in their interpretation of the same symbol; finally, context conversion in the process of cross-cultural communication can easily distort symbolic meaning. Figure 2 illustrates that through quantitative analysis of the literature, it is found that there is a clear imbalance in the coverage of cultural background in existing research: (1) Studies with Korean cultural background accounted for the highest proportion (28.57%, 4 articles), reflecting the importance Korean scholars attach to the protection of traditional cultural symbols; (2) China-related studies accounted for 14.29% (2 articles), indicating that Chinese scholars need to

increase their attention in this field; (3) Spain and Denmark each accounted for 7.14% (1 article each), representing the initial exploration of this issue by European scholars; (4) Studies with unclear cultural background accounted for as high as 57.14% (8 articles). This phenomenon deserves attention and may affect the universality of the research conclusions.

Figure 2: Cultural background distribution map

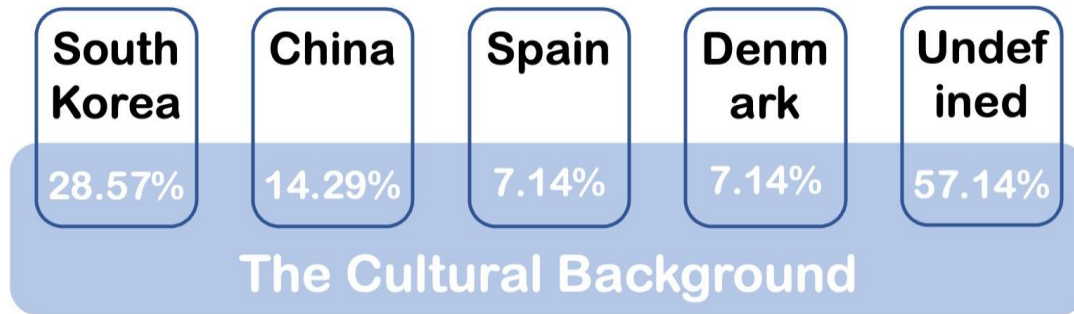
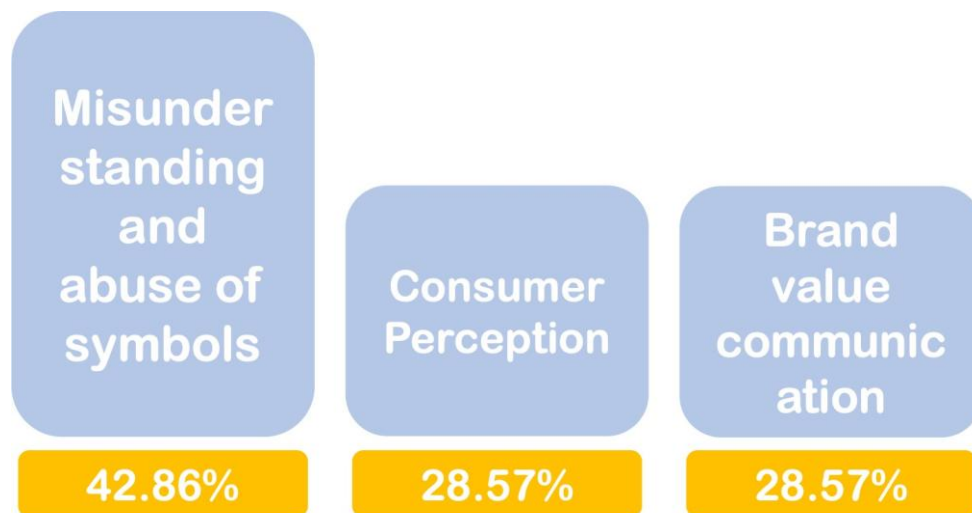


Figure 3 illustrates that in terms of the distribution of research focus, the problem of misreading and abuse of symbols is the most prominent, accounting for 42.86% (6 articles), followed by consumer perception and brand value communication, each accounting for 28.57% (4 articles). This distribution shows that current research mainly focuses on the misuse of traditional symbols in packaging design and the loss of their cultural significance, while also paying attention to consumers' cognition of symbols and the transmission effect of brand value.

Figure 3: Distribution of research focus

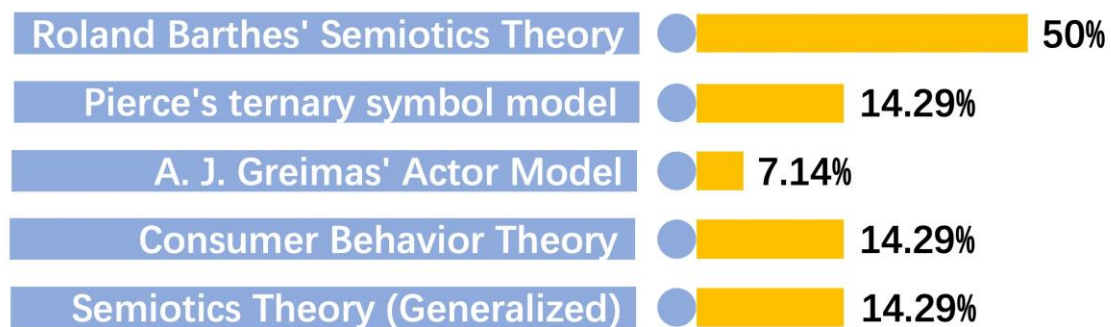


4.1.3. Analysis and Application Theory

Figure 4 illustrates that through the review of 14 articles, it can be found that semiotic theory occupies a dominant position in packaging design research. The specific application is as follows: Barthes's (1967) semiotic theory is the most widely used, accounting for 50% (7 articles), mainly used to analyze the signifier and signified of symbols, myth construction, and multiple meanings of symbols. Peirce's (1994) ternary symbol model accounts for 14.29% (2 articles), mainly used to analyze the relationship between symbols, objects, and interpretation items, revealing the dynamic meaning

generation process of symbols in communication. Greimas' (1984) actor model accounts for 7.14% (1 article), mainly used to analyze the dynamic communication process of symbols in packaging design, especially the relationship between actors and actions. In addition, consumer behavior theory accounts for 14.29% (2 articles), mainly used to analyze consumers' perception and preference of packaging design symbols, revealing the influence of cultural background and personal experience on symbol interpretation. The broad semiotic theory accounts for 14.29% (2 articles), mainly used to analyze the communication semantics and cultural significance of symbols in packaging design, further expanding the scope of application of semiotic theory.

Figure 4: Theoretical application data



The application of these theories provides a multi-dimensional analytical perspective for packaging design research and provides rich theoretical resources for subsequent research.

4.1.4. Analysis and Research Conclusions

Through an in-depth analysis of the research conclusions from 14 articles, the findings are primarily concentrated in four categories: misinterpretation and abuse of traditional symbols, consumer perception and the influence of cultural background, brand value communication and symbol use, cross-cultural communication, and changes in symbol meaning. Among them, the research conclusions on brand value communication and symbol use are the most prominent (35.71%), followed by the misreading and abuse of traditional symbols (28.57%). The study reveals that brands convey their market positioning and brand identity through visual symbols in packaging design; however, the overuse of symbols may lead to a loss of cultural authenticity. Especially in cross-cultural communication, traditional cultural symbols are often misread or abused, resulting in the dilution or distortion of their original cultural meaning. Through an in-depth analysis of these two types of problems, the surface phenomenon of symbol abuse and its root causes are revealed.

In addition, the article proposed specific countermeasures to provide practical guidance for designers and brands. These countermeasures emphasize that cultural authenticity should be respected in packaging design to avoid misinterpretation and abuse of symbols, thereby enhancing consumer trust and brand value. These suggestions not only provide direction for design practice but also provide essential references for brands to maintain cultural integrity in cross-cultural communication. Future research can further combine multicultural contexts to explore innovative applications and communication strategies of symbols in packaging design. Table 3 presents a comprehensive breakdown of these findings, showing their relative frequency and interrelationships.

Table 3: The research conclusions mainly focus on four aspects and core countermeasures

Method	Source	Percentages	Core Countermeasures
Brand value communication and symbol usage	Lee Mi-jin & Jeon (2018), Celhay & Remaud (2018), Arboleda Arango (2008), Min & Lee (2014), Yang & Dong (2009)	35.71%	1. Building interaction with consumers: Interact with consumers through a symbol system to ensure that symbols convey brand value accurately.
Misunderstanding and abuse of traditional symbols	Han & Kang (2014), Hae, (2024), Luo (2012), Du & Park (2022)	28.57%	2. Respect cultural background: Fully consider the cultural background of traditional symbols and avoid confusing meanings and superficial use of symbols.
The Influence of Consumer Perception and Cultural Background	Elizabeth et al. (2014), Kong (2015), Moon & Um (2018)	21.42%	3. Symbolic Propagation Semantics: Communicate brand value and product characteristics through symbolic semantics, optimizing consumer perception.
Cross-cultural Communication and Changes in Symbolic Meaning	Liu & Nah (2021), Cho (2010)	14.28%	4. The Modern Application of Traditional Symbols: Explore the application of traditional symbols in modern design to ensure that the cultural significance of symbols is respected.
			5. Cross-cultural design strategy: In cross-cultural design, fully consider the different understandings of symbols in various cultural backgrounds.
			6. Naturalistic design style Using environmentally friendly materials and natural elements conveys the brand's environmental philosophy.

4.1.5. Theoretical framework "application-misinterpretation-optimization" three-dimensional analysis of current literature

The theoretical framework proposed in this study systematically integrates 14 representative documents to construct a comprehensive analysis system encompassing application, misinterpretation, and optimization, providing a structured tool for both theoretical research and practical application of traditional cultural symbols in packaging design.

The application dimension focuses on the selection and expression of symbols, revealing the results of existing research on the corresponding relationship between symbol signifiers (such as colors and patterns) and signifieds (cultural connotations). At the same time, it highlights that 64% of the research is limited to a single cultural context and lacks investigation into the dynamic evolution of symbols. The misreading dimension systematically categorizes the three types of symbol misreading through quantitative data (such as the cultural discount rate of 42%) and typical cases, including cultural cognitive bias, commercial value alienation, and uncontrolled ambiguity. It critically points out that the current misreading attribution model is too simplified, and the sample size and depth of consumer cognitive research are insufficient. In the optimization dimension, only 21% of the existing optimization solutions are

emphasized, and there is a general lack of empirical testing. It is necessary to develop a differentiated response model for the type of misreading.

This framework can accurately identify the theoretical blind spots and methodological limitations in literature research, providing improvement directions for subsequent research. The innovation of this framework lies in placing the problem of symbol misreading under a multi-dimensional cross-validation research paradigm, which ensures both the comprehensiveness of the analysis and the reliability of the conclusions. Table 4 applies 14 specific articles to the theoretical framework and systematically analyzes the fundamental reasons for the phenomenon of symbol misreading and abuse.

Table 4: "Application-Misinterpretation-Optimization" three-dimensional analysis diagram

Existing Limitation	Details	Source
Application	The literature only analyzes single-country cases; only uses semiotic theory for analysis; and does not examine the dynamic evolution of cross-cultural communication.	Han & Kang (2014), Lee Mi-jin & Jeon (2018), Elizabeth et al. (2014), Celhay & Remaud (2018), Liu & Nah (2021), Arboleda Arango (2008), Yang & Dong (2009)
Misread	The misreading attribution model is too simplistic; the sample size of consumer cognition research is insufficient	Hae (2024), Luo (2012), Du & Park (2022), Kong (2015)
Optimize	The strategy lacks empirical testing; it does not distinguish between types of misinterpretation	Min & Lee (2014)

4.2. Key Finding

The analysis of 14 studies on packaging design semiotics reveals the core role of cultural symbols and cultural narratives in shaping consumer perception and brand communication, while also exposing the limitations of current research in methodology, theoretical framework, and practical application.

First, the research method shows a clear qualitative tendency. Twelve of the 14 studies used qualitative analysis, only one was a quantitative study, and one was a mixed study. This imbalance may lead to a strong subjectivity in the conclusions and a lack of empirical verification supported by data, thereby weakening the universality of the research results. The insufficiency of quantitative research limits the statistical generalizability of the conclusions, while the lack of mixed methods hinders the multi-dimensional discussion of the problem. Future research needs to strengthen methodological diversity to improve the rigor and scope of application of the conclusions.

In addition, although cultural symbols are widely used, their misinterpretation and abuse vary from field to field. For example, food and cosmetics packaging focus more on the surface innovation of visual symbols (such as patterns and colors), while wine packaging emphasizes the driving role of regional cultural symbols in consumer decisions. This difference reflects the dynamic nature of symbolic meaning in different

consumption scenarios and also shows that the problem of misinterpretation needs to be analyzed in a targeted manner in combination with the specific industry background, rather than being attributed in a general way.

Third, most studies do not adequately define the cultural context. Among the 14 studies, only a few clearly used specific cultures, such as Korea, as the background, and the rest did not clearly state the research context. This ambiguity may limit the cross-cultural effectiveness of symbol interpretation and ignore the potential impact of regional differences on symbol meaning. For example, the metaphors of the same symbol in East Asian and Western cultures may be completely different. Future research needs to clarify cultural boundaries to enhance the pertinence and explanatory power of the conclusions.

Fourth, the theoretical application is concentrated on the semiotic framework of [Barthes \(1972\)](#) and [Peirce \(1994\)](#), and other theories (such as social semiotics or cognitive semiotics) are hardly involved. This singleness may hinder the in-depth analysis of the mechanism of symbolic meaning generation, especially the polysemy and context dependence of symbols in dynamic communication. Introducing multiple theoretical perspectives (such as critical discourse analysis or cross-cultural semiotics) will help expand the depth and innovation of research.

Finally, the practical guidance value of the research is limited. Although some literature proposes suggestions such as cultural authenticity protection or designer training, the measures are homogeneous and lack empirical testing. For example, for specific problems such as commercial alienation or cognitive bias of cultural symbols, differentiated solutions have not yet been formed. In addition, the dynamic evolution of symbolic meaning in cross-cultural communication remains to be explored. Future research should combine empirical data with industry cases to propose operational and contextualized strategies to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Through the analysis of the above problems, the current research has certain limitations in research methods, cultural background, theoretical application, and cross-cultural communication. Future research should strengthen the use of quantitative and mixed methods, clarify the cultural background, expand the scope of application of semiotic theory, and deeply explore the misreading and abuse of symbols in cross-cultural communication, to provide more solid support for the theory and practice in the field of packaging design.

5. Conclusion

This study systematically analyzes 14 representative papers on the application of traditional symbols in packaging design, focusing on four key dimensions: research methods, research objects, theoretical frameworks, and research results. By applying the proposed "application misreading optimization" theoretical framework, a strong theoretical argument is provided for analyzing the misreading and abuse of traditional symbols in packaging design. The advantages and limitations of the current research are identified, while providing feasible paths for future development.

This study has some limitations. The study is based on 14 articles with a small sample size, which may limit the universality of the conclusions. The dominance of qualitative methods may ignore broader trends. Some studies do not clarify the cultural

background, which affects the cross-cultural applicability of the conclusions. The dominance of semiotic theory may ignore other relevant theories. The practical suggestions proposed in this study have not been verified by actual cases, and the effectiveness of theoretical suggestions should be tested through practice.

Future research should strengthen the use of quantitative and mixed methods to improve scientificity and universality and explore in depth the application and interpretation of traditional symbols in different cultural contexts to design more culturally sensitive strategies. It can combine multidisciplinary perspectives such as cultural studies and consumer behavior theory to provide a more comprehensive analytical framework. At the same time, it is necessary to develop innovative design practices that respect cultural authenticity and meet market needs, formulate design guidelines to avoid the misuse of symbols and analyze the evolution of symbol use and its long-term impact on consumer perception through long-term follow-up research.

In summary, this study provides a comprehensive theoretical interpretation of the misinterpretation and abuse of traditional symbols in packaging design through a systematic review of literature content, analysis methods and research contributions, and lays a solid foundation for future research and practice.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Research Ethics Committee of Universiti Teknologi MARA (REC). The ethical standards of the institutional research committee were used to conduct all procedures performed in this study involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants according to the Declaration of Helsinki.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declared no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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