

Packaging Design: Visual Culture to Design Culture

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Abstract

Discussing Packaging (packaging design) is not just about technical matters but also about understanding the overall design. Actual design will result in 2 (two) things, namely to understand (understanding, encoding) and to create (creating, encoding). Design has a very broad scope, both material and human aspects, physical, non physical, concrete-abstract, mind-body, non material-material, tangible- intangible, so that the design knowledge itself is also very wide-ranging. They are involving sensory data, the unconscious, feelings, emotions, ideas, concepts, intuition, even something unspeakable (unexplained-tacit knowledge), which makes this different from other disciplines. Similarly, the packaging, does not only mean as a place to store, facilitate, protect, send, and so on. Packaging (currently) far 'means', particularly changes in packaging of Visual Culture to Design Culture.

Keywords : Packaging, Visual Culture, Design Culture

INTRODUCTION

A meaning to design aesthetic not only observes through design work made into artifact but also includes cultural value and changes happenend in community. It appears as a living civilization structure and becomes interactive-synergy combination between human and nature up to the social environment in the wide meaning. Likewise, packaging design, it is present and borne from various considerations of thinking, idea, sense and soul of designer and related to invention in science and technology, social environment, set of value, culture, aesthetic rule, economic, politic up to development projection of the future (Yan Yan Sunarya, 2001)

Packaging design is a creative business connecting the form, structure, material, color, image, typography and design elements and product information, so that the product can be marketed (Klimchuck, 2007). Packaging design has function to wrap, protect, deliver, remove, save, identify and differentiate a product in market. Finally, packaging is functioned as product marketing by communicating personality or function of consumption product uniquely.

A packaging comes from the word “packed” means arranged (wrapped) neat; clean; tidy; settled, completed. Packaging also constitutes a result of packing or wrapped for protecting goods (business), while the meaning of wrapped is a noun for things wrapped up by paper (leave, plastic, etc); other meaning is what kind of the thing used to wrap. In other words,

the meaning of packaging in this paper is a material in the form of leave, paper, or plastic used to wrap food (Setiawan, 2007).

Packaging is also functioned as an aesthetic means to communicate with everyone from various different backgrounds, interests and professions. Therefore, knowledge about anthropology, sociology, psychology, ethnography can give benefit in the process of design and proper design option. Especially, knowledge about variety of socials, cultures, non biological human behavior and senses of culture and cultural differences that may help to understand how visual element can communicate the product well.



Figure 1 : Factors influencing Packaging Design

The above scheme shows several factors influencing packaging process, the essence of which as distributor of creativity, packaging design becomes a means to express. It is not too much to say that packaging design is a product expression not personal expression and moreover, the personal view of designer-marketing itself either its color, form, material or typography style shall have slightly influence a packaging design. Product expression can be achieved through creative process that physical and visual elements collectively communicate emotion, culture, social, psychology and information to customer. That is visualization problem to be the point of packaging design.

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VISUAL CULTURE

Packaging design is one of the parts of visual culture development. The development of visual culture itself is in accordance with the development of human thought, including pure art, television, photography, film up to advertising field. Actually, visual culture based on its development can be understood by 2 (two) ways, namely dominant cognitive and representation form of modernity. There are two unforgettable figures W.J.T. Mitchell and Mirzoeff. The development of visual culture is connected to western people thoughts concerning marketing target of product and urbanization effect of industrial revolution, then, developed quickly such as department store, shopping catalogue, tourism up to entertainment.

Thus, the visual expression related to technology which ranges from photography, film up to animation appears. This does not only include image but also text as well as screen culture that keep on developing along with technology following it. Mitchell argues that it is the visual era where place and assumption of the people involve in it (Guy Julier, 2007). Visual culture can be meant as the basis of observing method (visual is a medium of connecting in the certain time) with its complexities both social-cultural aspects up to lover expression in the certain time (Mitchell, 2002).

We can not separate the meaning of communication function here, where visual communication based on its name is communication through vision. Visual communication constitutes a sequence of process to deliver certain intention or purpose to other party using imaging media that read only by sense of vision. Visual communication combines art, sign, typography, image, graphic design, illustration and color in delivering it.

Visual sign and image bring meaning and interpretation, while visual language carries concept and sign directly through form and symbol that then processed, understood, comprehended through the perception of observer according to the perception pattern that is owned and shaped by its social system. Packaging is a part of visual culture products.

As a real example, when the customer is in a department store to buy certain food product, he/ she will walk immediately to food division. And the customer vulgarly will be put forth tens and may be million products to be chosen. And right there, the visual 'war' occurs, how the customer establishes his/her option on certain product? The first thing to be seen is its visual form. This is a reality that visual culture becomes the part of life, no matter where, condition and no matter when?

Out of the issue concerning branding, advertisement, and its kind, visual culture has bombarded us that make us controlled. This is an era of hyper-visual attacking war world of cultural industry, where the commodification/ commoditization (production – consumption) aspect plays significant role extremely. It means that if we can not be well behaved, we'll become customer keep on receiving and responding, even become the visual victim. From the moment we open our eyes rise from the bed up to closed (at the night) to go to sleep, our life always be showered by visual. Moreover, the development of technology at present has made everything possible ranging from traditional development to cyber era.

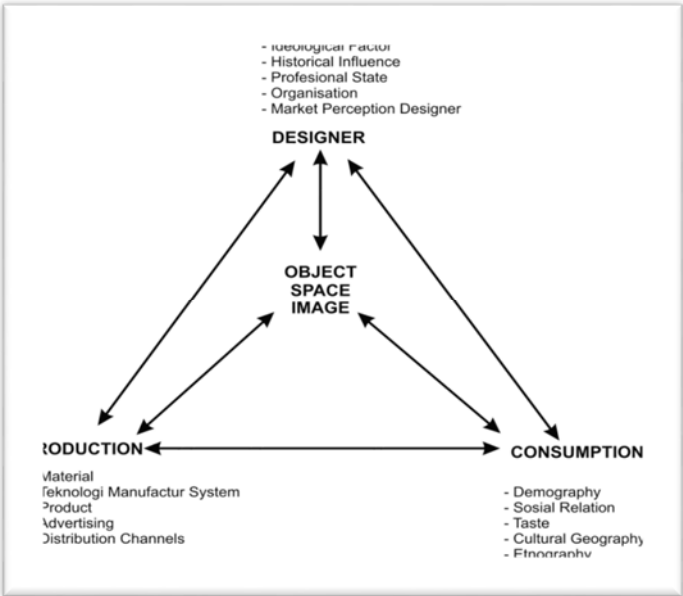


Figure 2 Domain of Design Culture

In the above scheme, it shows that design cultural structure especially visual culture consists of three significant elements namely production-consumption and designer that functioned as ‘intellectual actor’ in structure. That each element is supported by aspect included in it.




PACKAGING DESIGN CULTURE OF SMALL – MEDIUM SCALE BUSINESSES

Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall discuss about ‘culture circuit’. They tried to show the connection and relation between cultural element and its representation model so called share meaning. The language of role and function is operated as representation system just like verbal language. For representation means there is a meaning to message / idea as delivered to a

language structure containing a meaning from certain representation, to certain community. Here, packaging design can be comprehended as revealed expression through media, sign, meaning, form, adopted style by packaging designer that finally producing a work having representation system function.

In the research dealing with packaging of Small – Medium Scale Businesses performed by writer at this time, for instance, many Small – Medium Scale Businesses at present make competition to keep on improving its product image through its product packaging. According to their opinion, through product packaging, the buyer will not only recognize the product but also know the sign delivered to them that they are able to be part of design cultural industry. At present time, Small – Medium Scale Businesses no longer controlled by big industry as evidenced by their packaging that has already taken part in many aspects, not only aesthetic but also function , production as well as marketing aspect.

Some packagings available in Small – Medium Scale Businesses :

No.	Image/ Picture	Name of Packaging
1		Stand up Pouch
2		Composite Can
3		Aluminum Foil

4		Hanger
5		Lamination
6		Nylon Plastic
7		Plain Plastic

Source : Grant Research of Doctor Moch. Junaidi Hidayat, 2010

In this case, presentation of food product packaging shall has typical presentation since the people tend to consume something evolutionary in popular culture that keep on taking place, especially domestic market segment. In other words, packaging design shall be brave to face the fabrication product. According to marketing term “content is certainly important but at present packing is also important.

The concept of packing is more important than its content which is also the important thing in packaging design principle. The wish of producer who has a dream to compete with fabrication product actually is the form of industrialization capitalism at present time. Big producer deliberately makes blind the customer by interesting presentation that actually not needed by them, so that the small player such as UKM indirectly shall follow the development of popular culture given by this big producer. The concept of “packing is more important” has begun to stuff the people at present.

The writer shows that the consumptive people at present actually has already considered the ‘packing/ packaging’ than its “content”. It is happened not only to case study of packaging of fruit chip but also to other consumptive level, such as : at the time in supermarket, there are a lot of people “ buy a pig in a poke” by buying product having very attracted packaging without knowing the content of it. This is a specific characteristic of cultural industry becoming trend at present than people spend their money for ‘packing’ not ‘content’. A dilemmatic specific characteristic of consumption community.

Baudrillard argued that consumption is not the passion to buy so many commodities, one function of enjoyment, one function of individual, freeing the need, self satisfaction, wealth, or object consumption. The consumption is located in a meaning structure of one object, one system or sign code, one sign manipulation object manipulation as, one communication system (such as language), one exchange system (such as primitive kinship), one morality namely exchange system of ideology, difference production, isolation creating and individualism, one restrainer unintentionally both from social-economical-political sign system and a social logic (Ritzer; 2009, xxxiv)

UKM has tried to show its existence in competing with elite, in this case, big fabrication businessman. Small businessman must be creative in facing high competition under the control of big industrial capitalization. Creativity of UKM, especially food packaging shall be demanded, both ‘content’ and ‘packing’. The understanding of this creativity level is along with Creativity Industry issue which currently widespread all over the world. Indeed, the world is attacked by creative industry ‘virus’ especially Indonesia giving its special consent in Government program through blue print of Creative Industry Development Plan 2009-2015.

Form Follow Fun

This perspective is inspired by phrase of an United States of America Architect, Louis Sullivan under Architecture modern movement called 'form follow function'.¹ As well as on building in Architecture, Sullivan actually want to criticize a modernization of Architecture movement that form of architecture building shall be based on, even , subject to its function (need) of its use.

From such phrase, the writer tried to include it in the context of packaging design for packaging it self in addition to be demanded to protect, wrap, deliver, remove, save, identify, also has 'burden' in order to be easily differentiated with other product when it is marketed so as to be known well by customer. Therefore, the form of packaging shall be flexible following the need of product becoming object of packaging. But it becomes 'harakiri' for packaging designer especially producer and customer in general, because in fact, the design becomes fix to the certain pattern such as box, square and other geometric form. In fact, design becomes unvaried, innovative, the design creativity turns into sterile, which effecting the product that is unrecognizable by the people at the time of being marketing giving the rise of the decline of marketing and influencing production as well as the customer view who will find difficulty in identifying the product as desired that perhaps causing production chaos.

Then, the term of form follow fun may be suitable with the condition at this time, where the three compositions of packaging design doer, namely : producer, customer and designer are provided with freedom to interpret packaging design of a product. Freedom in all aspects by keeping the main function of packaging. 'Form follows fun' can be meant as ideological phrase of social – cultural and economical condition interpreted in design to visualize yesterday's future (in writer perspective is the present time without leaving the aspect of changes happened before).

'Form follow fun ' will create so many options of innovative and creative design in order to stimulate the designer in sharpening its ability, to give producer brilliant option to tempt the customer by paying attention solely to production up to marketing, while the customer its self will be given wide option to determine the taste as desired. This also creates touch point that stimulate visual much more, unforgettable experience and recognizable touch point.

¹ *The tall office building artistically considered*, in T. dan C. Benton dan D Sahrp (eds), *form follow function*, Crosby Lockwood Staples, London, 1975, hal. 13

In other words, the phrase of form follow fun just like packing and content, both must be seen as a body that impossible to be separated, where the packing becomes important size for the body in it, likewise the content that has important role for many parties than the presentation of packing.

Similarly to packaging design, form follows fun is a phrase of unification process between packing and content, beauty and eroticism in a body. Perhaps, it will create more chaos until the existence of migration of cross cultural ideology in packaging design itself emerges.

CLOSING

Based on the above review, it is concluded that reviewing packaging design (especially food packaging) related to consumption is not yet analyzed in great quantity and rarely seen. The field of consumption thinking always perceived by economical, psychological and sociological thinking. Packaging design also be understood as information media for producer in creating brand image awareness and brand awareness so that cognitive objective fulfillment (suggestion to buy lies on customer thought) shall be balanced by behavior objective (effort to persuade the customer to buy), and for the designer itself, it can be understood as creativity field and working productivity. For the customer, the fulfillment of the need will become the reason of consuming product that is possible to be consumption culture. Finally, the three of those parties (producer, customer –designer) must be able to build value culture, namely a process of evaluation and not a reevaluation of production – consumption system completely.

Without being aware, consuming packaging is a lifestyle that all at once representing image, social-cultural up to economic status. Finally, packaging product design and consumption are intercombined perspective standardly and difficult to be released. Even though, sometimes, it becomes false conscious for its lover but it will become the true truth that must be interpreted positively. Since the consumption process here constitutes a quite significant instrument to clarify the life style of consuming community and design itself. Design consumption or thinking field as being consumed?

Design is a practice that can not be separated from object and human, so that it must be prespective as a whole and complex willingly or not, consciously or not, necessarily or not. Once again, this paper shows that design is an approach toward object and human all at once, therefore its review needs more holistic and complex approaches. For field of design includes the aspect of object and human, physic and non physic, concrete or abstract, body-mind,

material-non material, tangible-intangible which always involve consciousness-unconsciousness, feeling, emotion , idea, concept, intuition, even undescribable (unexplainable)-tacit knowledge to be differentiated from other sciences as well as data collection from multi disciplinary sciences. Packaging is an exchange of visual culture into design culture especially for food of Small – Medium Scale Businesses that at present time has full awareness of the importance of visual presentation in its food product packaging.

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