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## TRANSFORMATION OF CONTENT AND IMAGE IN CHINESE ADVERTISING POSTER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

**The purpose of the article** is to analyse and reveal the changes that took place in the Chinese advertising poster during the twentieth century. The work aims to establish the links between the cultural and political context and the figurative and semantic content of messages in advertising posters. **The research methodology** involves the use of general scientific and special methods. Historical analysis is used to understand the historical and cultural processes of the twentieth century and their impact on the development of advertising posters in different periods. Content analysis is used to analyse the content and images of advertising posters of different periods and to identify the main themes and ideas they express. Semiotic analysis is used to study signs and symbols in advertising posters; comparative analysis to identify the content and visual differences of advertising posters during the twentieth century. **The scientific novelty of the work** lies in the identification of differences in the content and images of Chinese advertising posters in different periods of the political history of China in the twentieth century. The interaction between the images of ideological messages of political and social propaganda and commercial advertising is traced. **Conclusions.** It has been found that the twentieth-century advertising poster is an important component of China's cultural and historical heritage and reflects changes in the country's political, social and cultural context. It is shown that advertising posters used as a means of propaganda in different periods of the twentieth century became less ideological and more focused on the commercial promotion of goods and services over time. The figurative and semantic characteristics and graphic language of the advertising poster have also undergone changes, and hybridisation in the formation of the advertising image, based on the principles of propaganda iconography and new marketing standards in commercial advertisements of the 1980s and 1990s, gradually gave way to new visual advertising forms.

**Key words:** China, advertising poster, propaganda, ideological influence, commercial advertising, image, content.

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**Трансформація змісту та образу в китайському рекламному плакаті ХХ ст.**

**Метою роботи** є аналіз та розкриття змін, які відбулися в китайському рекламному плакаті протягом ХХ століття. Робота спрямована на встановлення зв'язків між культурно-політичним контекстом та образно-змістовим наповненням повідомлень у рекламних плакатах. **Методологія** дослідження передбачає використання загальнонаукових та спеціальних методів. Історичний аналіз залучено для розуміння історико-культурних процесів ХХ ст. та їх впливу на розвиток рекламних плакатів в різні періоди. Контент-аналіз для аналізу змісту та образів рекламних плакатів різних періодів та визначення основних тем та ідей, які вони висловлюють. Семіотичний аналіз застосовано для вивчення знаків та символів у рекламних плакатах; порівняльний аналіз для виявлення змістових і візуальних відмінностей рекламних плакатів протягом ХХ ст. **Наукова новизна** роботи полягає у вияві відмінностей у змісті та образах китайських рекламних плакатів у різні періоди політичної історії Китаю ХХ століття. Простежено взаємодію між образами ідеологічних повідомлень політичної та соціальної пропаганди та комерційної реклами. **Висновки.** Виявлено, що рекламний плакат ХХ століття є важливою складовою культурної та історичної спадщини Китаю та відображає зміни в політичному, соціальному та культурному контексті країни. Показано, до рекламні плакати, використані як засіб пропаганди у різні періоди ХХ ст. з часом стали менш ідеологізованими та більше спрямованими на комерційну популяризацію товарів і послуг. Образно-змістова характеристика та графічна мова рекламного плакату також зазнала змін, а гібридизація у формуванні рекламного образу, базована на принципах пропагандистської іконографії та нових маркетингових стандартів у комерційних оголошеннях 1980–1990-х рр. поступово дала місце новим візуальним рекламним формам.

**Ключові слова:** Китай, рекламний плакат, пропаганда, ідеологічний вплив, комерційна реклама, образ, зміст.

Relevance of the research topic. The advertising poster is an important element of communication between companies and consumers and a source of cultural and historical information that reflects the changing social and political conditions that influenced the form and content of advertising messages. It is especially important to study the changes in the Chinese advertising poster during the 20th century, because during this period China experienced a number of important historical events that significantly influenced the cultural and political context of advertising. Propaganda messages, which were used to promote ideology and political campaigns, also played an important role in shaping the aesthetics and content of advertising posters.

Analysis of research and publications. The problem of advertising poster design occasionally becomes part of research devoted to the development of visual communications in China during certain stages of the 20th century. The poster is examined in the context of the development of Chinese graphic design in Wang S. Z. (1989), Wong W.S. (2003), Minick S. & Jiao P. (1990), Feifei F. (2006). Researcher Chu J. examines the practices and approaches in Chinese advertising, as well as the poster as a tool for the implementation of advertising messages (Chu, 1982). Bhardwaj A. (2020) explores the possibilities of graphic design as a propaganda tool. In a research paper, Landsberger S. (1994) examines the poster in the context of propaganda during the era of Deo Xiaoping's Four Modernisations (1978–1988). Li H. (2016) provides a general picture of the development of advertising in China, highlighting separately the Shanghai advertising practice of the 1920s and 1930s, the absence of commercial advertising during the Cultural Revolution, and the problems of advertising development in the context of today [7]. Some studies are devoted to the problem of choosing between Chinese and Western values in the formation of advertising strategies [2; 3].

At the same time, the issue of transformation and hybridization of the content and image of the poster – from ideological to commercial remains unsolved. The issue of mutual influence between ideological and commercial posters during the 20th century, in the context of the historical and cultural background of China, also needs to be resolved.

The purpose of the study is to consider the evolution of Chinese advertising during the 20th century and reveal how propaganda messages, their content, style and aesthetics were transformed into commercial advertising. The research is focused on the analysis of the visual elements of the advertising poster, such as images and symbols,

colours, and text. Moreover, as part of the research, various topics and ways of presenting goods and services in advertising will be analysed.

Presenting main material. In Chinese culture, advertising has always played an important role and has been used to promote goods and services, as well as to support cultural and political initiatives. The oldest forms of advertising in China are considered to be "huangzi" (幌子) and "jaopai" (招). "Huangzi" refers to a type of cloth sign that was displayed above the entrance to a store at fairs and other public events, and contained an advertising image of a product or service and text. Despite its ancient history (the earliest examples date back to the Han Dynasty), such signs were particularly popular during the Qing Dynasty (1644–1912) and were used in a wide range of businesses, from teahouses and restaurants to pharmacies and clothing stores [5, 33]. "Jaopai" form refers to a type of signboard made of wooden or bamboo slats in a rectangular or oval shape, which contained information not about the product, but about a specific seller or service provider. They were often decorated with colourful images and were popular from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). The form of advertising messages "huangzi" and "jaopai" is a symbol of the rich cultural heritage of advertising practice in China. Widespread in traditional Chinese society due to the effectiveness of the message and brevity, they are still used in some parts of China by small business owners as an effective and cheap tool to attract customers. Often, the information on these signs has a figurative interpretation of the product or service, using traditional graphic techniques and forms. Moreover, the practice of using photos or drawings of advertised goods is widespread, so only the hieroglyphic block-explanation adds a "Chinese image" to this universal visual communication.

The development of the Chinese advertising poster can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when China was undergoing a period of modernization, industrialization, and expanding trade. At this time, Western ideas and technologies were introduced to China, and with them came new forms of advertising. Traditional, often hand-made, advertising posters were moving into mass-produced status, becoming more detailed and varied and suited to streamlined, professional advertising campaigns. The most famous phenomenon of the 1920s and 1930s in the design of visual communications in China was the Shanghai advertising poster. Its specialty was the combination of elements of traditional Chinese art with new graphic techniques and printing technologies. Shanghai's advertising posters (Hai Pai style) were rich in colour, used elaborate

ornaments and a variety of images from the world of nature, human activity and culture. Shanghai artists used bright geometric shapes and bold design solutions, which made their advertising posters extremely attractive and memorable. One of the sources of the Shanghai advertising poster style was traditional Chinese painting, especially the varied shapes and colours of Chinese mosaics and wall paintings. European artistic movements also had a significant influence on the development of the Shanghai style. For example, futuristic experiments with typography found an echo in identical compositional and content techniques. An example is a tea advertisement, where Chinese characters not only convey the name of the product, but also form, like futuristic poetry, a vertical figurative composition of hot steam from a cup [4, 8]. The "Art Deco" style, which at that time was very popular in the world, also had a significant impact on the Shanghai advertising poster. Women's portraits and figures were especially elegant in such advertising posters – they formed the central main image of the composition, and their image reflected modernity through gestures, accessories and clothes. The advertised product was often depicted on an additional field, supplemented with a geometrical ornament or blocks of hieroglyphs. The symbiosis of the aesthetics of traditional Chinese symbols and European compositional and figurative approaches formed a unique recognizable graphic language of the poster. The main names of the Shanghai advertising poster are Cai Yuanqi, Cheng Shiping, Wong Sang Ku and others, who promoted consumer products and cosmetic products through vivid high-art works.

After the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the development of commercial design was significantly slowed down as a sign of the harmful culture of consumerism, and the poster received a completely different vector of development - advertising began to reflect socialist collective values and themes through the images of workers, peasants and soldiers. The Shanghai style was partially adopted by the commercial design of Hong Kong in the post-war period and became the basis of the classical graphic language of Chinese advertising design to this day [9]. And the main vector of the development of the Shanghai poster, as well as Chinese posters in general, was propaganda. Today, the Propaganda Poster Art Centre opened in Shanghai, which collected about 300 vivid Mao-era posters with heroic figures and political slogans [6].

So, the radical transformation of the Chinese advertising poster during the Cultural Revolution

(1966–1976) was manifested in maximum politicization. A small percentage of posters advertised raw materials and industrial products, while the general array of printed public notices broadcast ideological slogans, popularized political campaigns, and called on citizens to participate in the revolution. Heroic workers and peasants demonstrated their labour achievements from the canvas of the poster, but most often the hero of the messages was Mao Zedong and other revolutionary leaders, as well as slogans promoting the principles of Maoism. Researchers have noted that behind the triumphant narratives and heroic images were often catastrophic tragic events, such as forced collectivization and famine, which killed 30 million people [6].

Under Mao Zedong's regime, legislation related to visual propaganda formed a whole series of restrictions and regulations related to both the content and the visual side of the poster. The style of these messages largely imitated Soviet realism. They contained red on white or white on red bold text slogans or quotes and a realistic depiction of the communist leader. He was presented as a noble brave leader, a demigod, often with an exaggerated scale. This godlike figure was expected to be worshiped and emulated by the people. The working class was represented as strong, muscular men holding red books (like a notebook of Chairman Mao's quotes) or doing physical labour [1]. Women also became heroes of propaganda, appearing on posters with weapons, heroising and glorifying war as an art form, encouraging the fair sex to fight for their country and power. Also, the practice of portraying the antagonists of the government was widespread – small people depicted as cowards and traitors, vulnerable, similar to aliens, captured by powerful pro-government warriors. Another important means of forming a propaganda message was colour. In China, red symbolizes luck and joy, as well as the national flag. It carries a positive context and is considered favourable in the process of persuasion, therefore, propaganda goals can be achieved even with the colour red alone. Often, the entire canvas of the poster was filled with red flags and together with other elements of the composition really had an effective impressive effect on the viewer. For years, Chinese propaganda used a specific realistic style, compositional techniques, colours and slogans, because they were really effective.

After Mao Zedong died in 1976, the strict rules of ideological visual propaganda were relaxed, and more creative freedom appeared in stylistics, colours and principles of message formation. Also, discussions are beginning about

the restoration and legitimization of commercial advertising as a tool for the formation of a rich socialist economy [5, 33]. Advertising accompanied China's economic growth in the 1980s, with banners featuring Deng Xiaoping's quotes explaining economic processes (such as "Development is a hard principle" or "Getting rich is wonderful") appearing alongside purely commercial offerings. The general style and visual content of the message were as clear and easy to understand as possible – product images, explanatory text, characters from Chinese literature or history, or elements of traditional Chinese ornaments. Advertisements and shop windows, despite acquiring a commercial content, continued to function as internal propaganda of the socialist economy. Reflecting a more commercial and consumerist focus, the posters often featured Western-style imagery and promoted Western products, reflecting China's growing interest in globalization and consumer culture. The focus of the message on the poster began to shift from the official description of the product to explaining how to use it. It is worth noting that in addition to the novelty value of the advertised goods, the posters began to demonstrate additional values related to lifestyle. Advertising promised both an idealized romance of Chinese nature and traditional life, and a visualization of dreams of a modern, dynamic, progressive Western world [5, 23]. Moreover, advertisers began to use images of famous people in visual messages – athletes, actors, that is, communist leaders and heroic abstract characters were replaced by real, generally respected successful representatives of society. However, the first steps of commercial art after the long hiatus caused by the Cultural Revolution were still identical to political propaganda. Advertising concepts and the visual language of propaganda were deeply rooted in the experience of developers, often without specialists, state-owned companies continued to develop already commercial advertising by internal propaganda departments. Motifs that were typical in propaganda posters with a slightly changed connotation appear in consumer advertising. For example, the globe displayed national pride in propaganda and the global authority of Chinese products in commercial messages. The image of flight (planes, rockets, pigeons, traditionally used for propaganda) in the commercial poster is reproduced in flying products, soaring logos or slogans, helping to visualize the dynamics of development and flourishing of production. The image of a large industrial object, which worked as a propaganda for economic development, changed the emphasis to the presentation of industrial goods of local

production. The image of a sunflower, which was a symbol of honouring Mao Zedong, changed its meaning to represent specific products (for example, Sun Microsystems). The image of the Great Wall was used by propaganda as an illustration of everything related to patriotism, state control, the greatness of the state as the most effective symbol of Chinese identity. For example, in 1997 the wall as a symbol of unity and future prosperity was used in posters extolling the return of Hong Kong to Chinese jurisdiction. In commercial advertisements of public corporations and institutions, the image of a wall was used to convey stability and reliability. In particular, the national bank's advertising declares guaranteed security and stability in this way. The image of the family during the Cultural Revolution was not widespread and gave way to various collectives. The only important context with the emergence of a family is the promotion of a happy life with one child – a girl (to convince that not only a son should be desired). The one-child family in propaganda represented the concepts of happiness, collective well-being and care for public property, it is an executor of demographic policy. Instead, in commercial advertising, the family represented wealth and their own well-being, could be depicted with a son or several children in an affluent, well-furnished environment, and advertise food, housing, entertainment, or household appliances. The reform policy also contributed to the formation of urban themes in advertising and propaganda. The slogan "Long live the People's Republic of China" accompanied utopian images of a science fiction-like urban environment under communist rule.

In general, the Chinese advertising poster of the 20th century has undergone significant changes in its image and the content it conveys. Reflecting China's changing social and political landscape during this time, the advertising poster transformed from the traditional and high-art imagery of the 1920s and 1930s, socialist propaganda, and the politicized posters of the Cultural Revolution, to more commercial and consumer-oriented visual messages in the 1980s and 1990s. The Chinese advertising poster is actually a reflection of the complex nature and development of Chinese society.

Scientific novelty. The purpose of the work is to reveal the differences in the content and images of Chinese advertising posters in different periods of the political history of China in the 20th century. The interaction between images of ideological messages of political and social propaganda and commercial advertising is traced.

Conclusions. It was found that the advertising poster of the 20th century is an

important part of China's cultural and historical heritage. It reflects changes in the country's political, social and cultural context. It is shown that the advertising posters used as a means of propaganda in different periods of the 20th century became less ideological and more aimed at the commercial promotion of goods and services.

Further research on the transformation of content and image in the Chinese advertising poster of the 20th century will help to deepen the understanding of the relationship between political, social and cultural changes in China and the evolution of advertising space during the 20th century.

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