

## Shaping and Expressing of Happiness Image in Products

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### *Abstract*

*Happiness is humans' constant and eternal pursuit. The aspiration for happiness is also directly reflected in presentation of products. Spiritual value of products can be shaped by design conversion. Compared with emotional products, products with image of happiness are much closer to aspiration deep in people's heart and play the role of enlightening and nourishing people's spirit. It's shown by literature analysis that the sense of happiness emerges from satisfaction to feeling, perception and sensation. Besides function and sense of beauty, the sensation of "bring happiness to people" should also be taken into consideration in products' connotation. This study is done from exploration on a spiritual level to discuss design development of products with image of happiness. In addition, it also makes a further discussion based on focus method targeting explicit factors and implicit factors to summarize formal characteristics and connotation factors of products with happiness image and develop design presentation modes of them. According to the study, expression of happiness in products should combine external and internal characteristics together which is also directly related to people's sensory intuition, cultural experience, belonging of love and desire for achievement. This study made contributions as follows: 1. direct new orientation of product design thinking by discussing characteristics of products with happiness image; 2. provide reference for designing and planning practice of relevant industries.*

**Keywords:** *happiness image, product experience, spiritual value*

# Introduction

## Research Background and Motivation

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Happiness study began in late 1950's to indicate the quality of of life (Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). In recent years, with the development of positive psychology the optimal human functioning and a better quality life get more attentions. (eg, Keyes, et al., 2002; King, Eells & Burton, 2004; Rathunde, 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2001). To create a better life for human-being is as important as to solve people's psychological problems. (Keyes, & Haidt, 2003; Linley & Joseph, 2004). This is exactly like what the Greek philosopher Epicurus(n.d) said, happiness is the highest of all goods; it is that which all men strive to achieve. As an ethical guideline, Epicurus emphasized minimizing harm and maximizing happiness of oneself and others. From ancient times till now, humans' aspiration for happiness has never changed and moral principles of happiness advocated by philosophers even predict the orientation of our effort whose viewpoints and purposes are in accordance with the designing principles today. Design is done aimed at seeking common well-being for human being. Therefore, "design happiness" becomes designers' mission in its nature and expression of happiness image in products just responds to this ambition. Products are made because people need them. When products for daily use are adequate enough, people will gradually learn about that products should satisfy not only their rational requirement based on their practical function but also their emotional requirement by pleasing them. Especially in such a busy modern society full of high pressure, the sense of restlessness and disturbance always makes people lack of rich emotions. In this condition, products just play a key role. Fiske (2001) in his book *Understand Popular Culture* stated modern products have more spiritual contents expressed than material ones with the function of consolation. In Gobe (2002)'s opinion, products echoing with people's internal emotion are inspiring and able to meet requirement and desire which can't be satisfied temporarily. Norman (2004) proposed the concept of emotion designing, emphasizing that emotion will change users' cognition and thinking mode from rational one to perceptual. Pink (2008) thought what products' image expresses is special information which can satisfy a certain emotional requirement deep inside peoples' heart.

Products have influential energy which should be applied to create the sense of happiness. To achieve this purpose, products must have more considerate design to make them not only touching but impressive, meeting both sensory and spiritual requirement. Sensory and spiritual experience brought by products is used to induce the sense of happiness from users. It's a method of endowing products with spirituality, the idea of which is similar to that of emotional design nowadays in terms of modern design. However, products under this method are endowed with the function of inspiration and illumination. Today, when we see a lot of commodities with the sense of visual beauty, we may feel curious and find them interesting but may not be willing to buy them. However, when we see a commodity which arouses the sense of happiness and emotion from us,

we may want to buy them to enhance our energy. Products with happiness image are suggestive and comforting which are a kind of inspirational product. Meeting peoples' potential requirement is the key to realize products' value. With more and more focus put on sensory and cultural experience, happiness image presents a new design angle, which makes people have a new understanding of products.

New life style in modern times has changed relationship between people and products and increasing emotional interaction between them will definitely become the trend of future design. How to make products arouse happiness from people? What design factors should be included in happy products? This study will discuss potential factors constituting happiness image of products based on analyses of relevant researches, expecting to have information expressed by products take root in users' heart through communication of happiness image so as to increase products' spiritual value.

## Relevant Researches

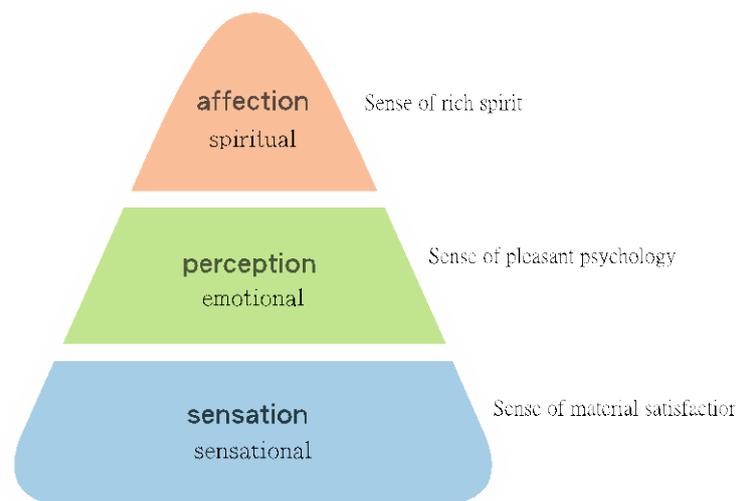
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### The Definition of Happiness Image

It should be known of the word Eudaimonia to understand the concept of "happiness". "ευδαιμονια" a word in Greek, which consist of "eu"(good) and "daimon"(genius), basically refers to the perfect realization of human potential characteristics particularly the excellent ability of rational thinking. Aristotle (n.d) clarified the aim and theme from the very beginning of book "Eudemian Ethics", "Happiness is the most beautiful, the best and the most pleasant thing in the world." It is the ultimate goal of the whole life for completion and self sufficiency (Woods · 1992). Darrin McMahon (2005) in the Book History of Happiness concluded outlook on happiness made from ancient Greek till now in western countries that, happiness means good luck in Homer; philosophers from ancient Greek think happiness equals to wisdom and virtue. During the period of enlightenment, happiness is carpe diem. Happiness comes into being from experience and share in life with strong moral consciousness in it and emphasizes common growth and prosperity. Modern psychology has mentioned the phrase of "subjective well-being" which emphasizes that happiness is the status of joy in heart and an attitude towards life basically composed by cognition and emotion (Diener, 2000). Father of positive psychology Martin (2003) believed happiness is aimed at realizing a flourishing life which can be concluded as joy + participation + intention=happiness. Hunter Institute of Mental Health (2010) proposes a "power" indicator targeting modern peoples' psychological health and happiness indicating five components of happiness-activeness, optimism, manhood, enjoyment of life and recovery flexibility. The sense of happiness comes from good interaction between man and himself, between man and man and between man and society, all of which can intensify the sense of happiness.

Happiness is to experience optimum function and experience which constitutes a good life and includes pleasure and significance (Ryan & Deci, 2001) . The sense of happiness should be achieved by satisfying both instinct of human being in its nature.

Maslow (1943)'s Theory on Hierarchy of Needs shows that humans' motivation and desire constitute a hierarchy of needs. The needs develop at a periodical process that higher needs are satisfied after basic needs are firstly met. Humans' pursuit to happiness also follows this process that they first pursue physiological needs at a lower phase and then the spiritual needs as a higher phase, during which the sense of happiness gets stronger gradually. Jorgensen and Nafstad (2004) think a wonderful life develops from simplicity to complexity at four levels including the pleasant life, the good life, the meaningful life and the full life. The sense of happiness also enhances at a periodical process from physical and psychological satisfaction to the spiritual satisfaction at peak. At the end of 19th century, the *selbstverwirklichung* specially emphasized by German philosopher Paulsen (1895) indicated that realizing one's own value by pursuing beauty and virtue is an important source of the sense of happiness. Therefore, happiness is forward mood with strong motivation which is strong enough to induce realization of humans' potential. Fredrickson proposed that forward mood impacts peoples' viewpoint and behavior, promotes increase of personal potential and helps establish ones' own psychological, social and physical resource (Fredrickson, 1998; Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). In Csikszentmihályi (1990)'s opinion, human beings' sense of happiness comes from top experience which is a flow state owned by people fully devoted to doing one thing. He explained happiness as a self-realization. Veenhoven (1996) described happiness as "degree of satisfaction in life" and pointed out that mood status in life is more important than subjective cognition and mental feeling at that time should be focused. In a word, the sense of happiness can be built based on physical, psychological and spiritual experience, spiritual experience in particular, in which the physical experience refers to sensory comfort, a sort of material satisfaction, psychological experience comes from a perceptually touching feeling, a kind of emotional satisfaction and spiritual experience lies in significance of existence, a type of spiritual satisfaction. The sense of happiness enhances gradually along with increase of levels and contributes to a rich and colorful life. (Figure 1)



**Figure 1**  
Three Levels of Happiness Image

## Design Happiness for Products

Modern definition on products has changed that they should serve more as the medium conveying information and expressing emotion than just tools. In 21st century, design should be characterized by people oriented with its core value developing from meeting functional and physiological requirement to mental and spiritual requirement. Junginger (2008) considered that design of commodities must have development which should be made centering on users. Fiske (2001) thought that spiritual level within products have already surpassed material level. Increasing spiritual value of products contributes to improvement of relationship between people and objects and makes them have talk to each other. Products with happiness image are aimed at combining material happiness with spiritual happiness together and increasing products' spiritual value based on physical and mental interaction.

Today's products combine both sensation and emotion together but they fail to express spirit. Spirit should be created with the method of surpassing emotion. Happiness image has functions of comforting and inspiring people, making them feel happiness and learn happiness. Products are the best medium to express spirit and design of happiness image is aimed at "touching" people. There are not only users' one-way emotional preference to products but also two-way spirit and mutual communication brought by products.

### Explicit Factors of Happiness Image

From Pink (2008)'s viewpoint, besides owning basic functions and aesthetic requirements, products should also pay attention to sensory image and satisfactory of information created by products to people's mental requirement. Sensory image is mainly made by products' color, shape and material. Impacted by users' innate intuition and acquired experience, different subjective feeling will be produced. Burchett (1991) made an exploration of people's preference to colors based on color psychology and found that "intuitive emotion" is main factor of color preference. McKellar (1965) in his research indicated that psychological image will be produced due to stimulation for 76% of people. Crozier (1994) stated information or symbol revealed by product shaping is relevant to the sense of pleasure they produce. Products' three explicit characteristics of color, material and shaping play a key role in impacting visual beauty and mental image.

### Implicit factors of happiness image

Analyzing formation of happiness image from its three levels has been made in some literatures. The first is personalization. Douglas & Isherwood (1996) thought people buy products out of three reasons: material happiness, spiritual happiness and self awarding. In Gobe (2002)'s opinion, today's customers choose products in accordance with personal life style and emotion to satisfy their requirement and desire. The second is familiarity. Desmet and Hekkert (2007) pointed out that interaction between people and products is mainly composed by beauty appreciation experience, significance experience

and emotional experience. Debra Lilley (2009) believed taking people's idea, viewpoint and habit into consideration of design can enhance sustainable value of products. The third is the sense of belonging. Mugge (2008) propose four determinants of product attachment: self-expression, group affiliation, pleasure, memories. Product design should include experience on happiness in life into patterns of products, which not only increases attachment between people and products but also promotes strengthening of products' happiness impression. The fourth is moral and sentiment. Jordan (2000) classified pleasure into physio-pleasure, psycho-pleasure, socio-pleasure and ideo-pleasure based on Maslow (1943) and Tiger's (1992) theories, in which ideo-pleasure contains strong social consciousness and an expectation of common prosperity. The fifth is recollection emotion. D.J. Huppertz (2009) thought peoples' emotion of recollection is their instinct when they are faced with indeterminacy of future. They weaken their worry about future by memorizing value of the past. From C.Rapaille (2007) 's point of view, cultural symbols will touch customers' old memory and cause response in mood. Products endowed with meaning play their role in users' sub consciousness and arouse their same feeling. The sixth is self-realization. Lu (2007) indicated that products with sustainable design are helpful in realizing oneself. To have customers lead creation of products around themselves does good to increase spiritual value of products.

In summary, happiness image design focuses on exploration at a spiritual level. Together with factors adequately to trigger mental energy, they will make products around have forward function on people's mind characterized by stability, inspiration and enlightening. It's a challenge for design of future products which will lead product design into a brand-new area.

## Research design

To deeply investigate the key to design of product happiness image, this study is carried out through two stages by means of focus group. Focus group is used for investigating key points in the design of happiness image of product. Focus group is a qualitative research method adopting group interview to collect information about group members' recognition, attitude, behavior, etc toward research subject; it is not only an exploratory way of data collection but also an important tool for idea confirmation. In this study, focus group comprises five experts, all possessing over-four-year experiences of design practice. To obtain comprehensive research results, the study is carried out through two stages. The first stage uses dinner plate as test sample, thus to find out formal elements and explicit characteristics of happiness image; the second stage collects experts' opinions on design techniques of happiness-image products, so as to get inherent elements and implicit features of these products.

### Explicit Elements

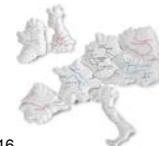
Firstly, the standard of selecting 50 plate samples randomly from the market is meeting requirements of outstanding features. The process is as following:

1. Ask five experts to make a brief description of 50 pieces of dinner plates, which are randomly coded, according to three formal feature-shape, color and texture.
2. Based on above descriptions, from these 50 plates, five experts (coded as A, B, C, D, E) pick out pieces featuring shapes, colors and textures that provide sense of being happy and unhappy. In this way, samples accepted by all experts are chosen. (Table 1)

form	happiness sample			unhappiness sample		
	shape	color	texture	shape	color	texture
A	02. 06. 09. 11. 32. 36. 41. 42. 45. 48	01. 04. 07. 11. 13. 21. 25. 27. 29. 35. 37. 41. 49	09. 13. 15. 22. 29. 33. 40. 44. 46. 48	06. 08. 10. 16. 22. 23. 30. 38. 44. 50	08. 14. 15. 18. 19. 28. 34. 40. 50	06. 10. 11. 17. 23. 31. 38. 44. 50
B	03. 05. 09. 14. 22. 28. 32. 35. 41. 42. 49	01. 05. 07. 11. 13. 21. 25. 31. 36. 41. 45. 49	03. 05. 13. 21. 25. 29. 33. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48	04. 10. 14. 15. 16. 18. 19. 20. 28. 30. 50	04. 08. 14. 15. 18. 19. 23. 26. 34. 38. 40. 42. 50	04. 06. 09. 11. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 31. 34. 38
C	09. 14. 25. 27. 32. 33. 37. 41. 42. 43. 48	03. 05. 09. 11. 13. 21. 25. 31. 36. 41. 45. 49	09. 13. 22. 23. 25. 29. 33. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47.	02. 07. 10. 12. 15. 16. 17. 20. 22. 28. 30. 38. 50	07. 14. 17. 18. 19. 26. 28. 37. 40. 42. 50	06. 10. 11. 17. 23. 31. 35. 38. 42. 44. 50
D	02. 06. 09. 10. 27. 30. 32. 33. 41. 42. 45. 48	05. 10. 12. 13. 21. 24. 25. 32. 35. 41. 45. 47. 49	01. 05. 09. 13. 21. 25. 29. 30. 33. 43. 44. 45. 46. 49	05. 10. 11. 13. 16. 18. 19. 20. 26. 30. 50	08. 14. 15. 18. 19. 22. 30. 34. 40. 50	06. 10. 11. 17. 23. 31. 38. 40. 50
E	05. 09. 11. 28. 29. 32. 34. 38. 41. 42. 44	13. 21. 22. 25. 29. 33. 41. 44. 45. 46. 49	04. 13. 18. 27. 29. 33. 34. 40. 41. 44. 46	03. 04. 07. 10. 14. 15. 16. 30. 50	04. 08. 14. 18. 19. 23. 40. 50	01. 04. 06. 11. 14. 21. 23. 31. 38. 42
Ω	9. 32. 41. 42	13. 21. 25. 41. 49	13. 29. 33. 44. 46	10. 16. 30. 50	14. 18. 19. 40. 50	6. 11. 31. 38

**Table 1**  
Sample record

3. The chosen samples are named according to above descriptions, and contrast results of formal characteristics of happiness image are as below (Table 2):

Sample of happiness	Form		Sample of unhappiness
  09                      32	Complete	<b>shape</b>	  10                      16
  41                      42			Organic
  13                      21			  14                      18

	<p>Warm Bright</p>	<p><b>Color</b></p>	<p>Cool Gloomy</p>	
	<p>Natural Pliable</p>	<p><b>Texture</b></p>	<p>Manmade Rigid</p>	

**Table 2**  
Contrast table for formal characteristics of happiness image

Analyses results show complete organic forms provide stronger sense of happiness than split or geometric forms; happiness feeling of warm and bright colors is greater than that of cool and gloomy colors; pliable natural texture general stronger happiness sense than rigid man-made texture. Products with above features are repeatedly shown in above table.

### Implicit Elements

This study conceives some questions according to literature analysis results, and invites experts to propose viewpoints and opinions on the design of happiness-image products. Main shaft 1: how to express happiness image through design connotations of product? Main shaft 2: among previous product design experiences, which technique can resonate happily in consumers? Five experts (coded as A, B, C, D, E) are asked to propose viewpoints and opinions on the design of happiness-image products. Content of verbatim transcription is classified, coded and named as below (Table 3):

Names of main shaft	Excerpt from verbatim transcription	Data resources
Specialty	Each time I see product featuring self personality, I have a feeling of being different from others.	A-03
	Own a rare product.	C-04
	Consumer's feeling of being exclusive and unique.	D-03

Sharing	Value its atmosphere of sharing and emphasize design that possesses a sense of wholeness.	A-01
	This product must be possessed or shared by all people.	A-02
	Be able to present a re-union or satisfactory image.	E-02
Symbol	The integration with auspicious ornamental patterns resembles ancient blue and white porcelain.	A-04
	Introduce traditional figures to create an impression of happy and harmonious family.	B-02
	Add globally used pictures and languages representing happy sense, e.g. the shape of "heart".	D-02
	Use symbolic meaning of cultural code to express happiness idea.	E-01
Memory	Mental interactions between people presenting product and the product user.	B-01
	Nostalgic emotion driven by long-term national memories of ceramic culture.	C-03
	Smell or trace that can stimulate happy memories.	D-01
Health	Natural products are preferable, such as pottery and wood-made things.	A-05
	Product materials should be nontoxic and safe.	B-03
	Whether the components of product are healthy and organic.	C-01
	Health image of product also matters.	E-03
Participation	Modification can be made in accordance with consumer's preferences; flexible design that satisfies desire for achievement.	B-04
	Make the product has diversified appearances, which can be integrated into different life contexts depending on user's preference.	C-02
	A part of user's efforts are contained in the product.	E-04

**Table 3**  
Codes for main shaft of implicit features of happiness image

After several rounds of discussions, following conclusions are drawn:

1. Uniqueness-to make products personalized and distinctive from others. For instance, individualized commodities let user express self and thus emotionally depend on the product (Douglas & Isherwood, 1996; Gobe, 2002).
2. Share-product is designed for being possessed and shared by many people, e.g. paired or combined design that generates a sense of belonging to a group through sharing (Mugge, 2008).
3. Addition of symbolic totem or mark or traditional expressing technique brings happiness-image product an effect of culture identity (Dewey, 1980; Oliver & Winer, 1987; C.Rapaille, 2007).

4. Memory-utilize symbol or memory to evoke nostalgia. Symbols like auspicious objects and patterns as well as memories such as friend's stamp and signature can affect people due to recognition and memory; possessing the product means receiving blessings (D.J. Huppertz, 2009).

5. Health-a feeling of co-existing with the nature harmoniously. For example, a product designed by natural and environmental technique makes people comfortable, relieved and also proud of making contribution to environment protection (Jordan, 2000).

6. Participation-make users partially participate in design of product. If subsequent processing of product is conducted in accordance with users' personal customs, the product will embody a part of users' efforts and thus strength their confidence and sense of achievement (Lu, 2007).

## Conclusions

We map constituent elements of happiness-image product into three levels of happiness image (figure 1). From viewpoint of sensation, people's initial happy experience of product originates from external form of product. Complete and organic shapes, warm and bright colors as well as pliable and natural texture are easily to cause feeling of happiness, and this is because people pursue nice, satisfactory, natural and healthy life. Regarding perception, no matter sharing common memories, perceiving cultural code or recalling past affairs, people's emotional instinct will result in a series of warm and happy feelings of being moved. In terms of affection, human needs levels are reflected by product image. If the instinct of pursuing self actualization can be satisfied through product, the product will feature a power of inspiring and affecting people. Through exclusive feeling of self identity, achievement sense of participation in product production, and moral feeling of contribution to the environment, product spirituality makes beauty and goodness of human nature explicit.

Based on above results, this study will develop products with happiness image to conduct consumer test in the future. Major contributions of this study include following two points:

1. Direct new orientation of product design thinking by discussing characteristics of products with happiness image;
2. Provide reference for designing and planning practice of relevant industries.

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