

Pierce Semiotics in Facilitating Regional Cultural and Creative Application Design Exploration in Leshan

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Keywords: Pierce Semiotics; Leshan Cultural Creation; Symbol Translation

Abstract: This study examines the pivotal role of symbols in cultural composition and the significance of semiotics in creative design applications, specifically investigating how Peirce's triadic model of semiotics can be translated into regional creative design practices in Leshan. By synthesizing existing literature and empirical data, the research analyzes the application approaches, implementation pathways, and evaluation frameworks of Peirce's semiotic theory in Leshan's regional design context. It establishes a systematic design methodology comprising "symbol extraction-semantic translation-functional reconstruction" and develops forward-looking application strategies. The findings demonstrate that Peirce's semiotic framework effectively directs the symbolic representation of regional creative products, simultaneously boosting cultural identity and commercial appeal. This provides both methodological foundations for regional cultural innovation and practical insights for developing culturally significant creative products.

1. Introduction

In recent years, regional cultural and creative products have become an important vehicle for the dissemination of local culture and tourism economy. Leshan, as a city with both World Cultural and Natural Heritage status, boasts abundant cultural symbol resources, such as the Leshan Giant Buddha, Buddhist culture on Mount Emei, and Yi ethnic group customs. The lack of diverse types of Leshan's cultural and creative products, along with superficial use of cultural symbols, urgently requires systematic design theory guidance. Peirce's semiotic theory emphasizes the dynamic relationship between the representation, object, and interpretation of symbols, providing a deep cultural translation method for the application of cultural and creative designs. This study explores the modern expression of Leshan's cultural symbols through literature, case studies, and event validation methods, using Peirce's semiotic framework to enhance the cultural depth and market competitiveness of Leshan's regional cultural and creative products.

2. Pierce's Semiotic Theoretical Framework

2.1 Pierce Symbol Ternary Relation Model

Pierce proposed the concept of the triadic relationship model of symbols, as suggested by philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, which posits that the meaning of a symbol is formed through

the interaction of three indivisible elements. The triadic relationship model consists of the representamen, the object, and the interpretant [1]. The representation refers to the material form of the symbol, such as cultural images like "Leshan Giant Buddha" and Master Haitong. The object is the real thing or concept that the symbol represents, i.e., the target of the symbol (such as Buddhist culture behind the Giant Buddha). The interpretant is the receiver's understanding or derived meaning of the symbol. For example, seeing "Leshan Giant Buddha" might evoke thoughts of "Leshan culture," or it could be translated into other languages [2].

Pierce's symbolic ternary relational logic is to represent the object through reduction, similarity or causal association. The interpretation is dynamic and varies with culture and experience, forming infinite derivative meanings of symbolic meaning, as shown in Figure 1.

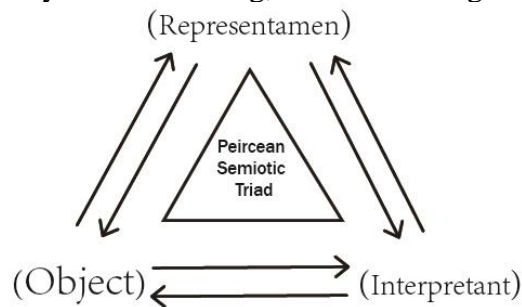


Figure 1 Pierce Symbol Ternary Relation

2.2 Application of Pierce Semiotics in Leshan Regional Cultural Creation

American philosopher and logician Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory provides a precise analytical framework for understanding the deep relationship between cultural symbols and material carriers. In the creative design of Leshan region, Peirce's three types of symbols—iconic signs, indexical signs, and symbolic signs—have been creatively transformed through the elements of local culture, forming unique visual narratives and cultural expressions.

Like symbols, as the most intuitive form of symbols, establish referential relationships based on visual, morphological, or functional similarities. In Leshan's cultural and creative practices, the magnificent sea of clouds over Mount Emei has become a highly representative visual symbol. Designers can present the misty sea of clouds over Mount Emei with delicate brushstrokes and realistic colors directly on silk scarves. When consumers wear them, it feels as if the ethereal aura of Mount Emei is enveloping their necks. Through this visual similarity, the scarf not only becomes a practical accessory but also a miniature carrier of Mount Emei's natural beauty, allowing users to experience the unique charm of Leshan's mountains and waters anytime, anywhere.

The indicator emphasizes the causal, spatiotemporal, or logical connections between symbols and objects. As the most iconic cultural symbol of Leshan, the grand outline of the Leshan Giant Buddha is ingeniously applied to bookmark design. The outlined contours of the Leshan Giant Buddha on the bookmark not only artistically refine this world cultural heritage but also carry the deeper meaning of "wisdom guidance." When readers place the bookmark between pages, the outline of the Buddha seems to guide them in exploring the ocean of knowledge, much like how the Leshan Giant Buddha has protected the people of Leshan throughout history, providing spiritual guidance and comfort, thus establishing an emotional connection between the cultural symbol and its users.

Symbolic signs rely on long-term social and cultural conventions and collective recognition to be endowed with meaning. The Leshan region boasts a rich minority culture, among which the Yi ethnic patterns carry profound cultural connotations and national spirit. Traditional Yi patterns have been reinterpreted through modern design language and integrated into fashion, accessories, and

other cultural and creative products. Consumers choosing fashionable cultural and creative products featuring Yi patterns not only pursue unique aesthetic styles but also show respect and inheritance of Yi culture. In this way, symbolic signs continue and spread Leshan's diverse ethnic culture in modern society. The three types of symbols in Peirce's semiotics intertwine and work synergistically in Leshan's regional cultural and creative industries, transforming Leshan's natural landscapes, human history, and ethnic customs into perceptible, tangible, and communicable cultural and creative products. This not only meets contemporary consumers' aesthetic and emotional needs for cultural products but also opens up new paths for the inheritance and development of Leshan's regional culture.

2.3 Leshan Symbol Translation Design Methodology

Based on Pierce's semiotics theory, the creative design of Leshan region can realize symbol translation through three paths: "direct quotation", "abstract simplification" and "metaphorical reconstruction", so as to build a dialogue bridge between traditional symbols and modern design

Direct quotation emphasizes the complete preservation and recreation of the original symbolic form. Taking the Leshan Giant Buddha as an example, its solemn sculptural form is replicated into small figurines or stationery decorations. Through material and craftsmanship transformations, consumers can experience the awe-inspiring power of this world cultural heritage up close. This design approach, with its high degree of morphological similarity, directly evokes people's recognition and emotional resonance with the Leshan cultural landmark, making the Giant Buddha symbol a portable cultural imprint. The abstract simplification corresponds to the conversion logic of indicators, aiming to extract core features from complex regional symbols, conveying deep meanings through minimalist visual language. In the design application of Mount Emei elements, designers simplify the undulating contours of the mountain range and the misty atmosphere into highly dynamic minimalist lines, which are applied to notebook covers, phone cases, and other cultural and creative products. These lines not only refine the natural form of Mount Emei but also serve as a bond connecting users with the spirit of Leshan's mountains and waters, carrying profound cultural connotations through simple visual symbols. Metaphorical reconstruction breaks the original contextual constraints of symbols, endowing them with new contemporary significance. In the modern interpretation of Leshan Buddhist culture, designers integrate the Buddhist "lotus" symbol with modern lighting design, transforming the blooming lotus into the opening and closing structure of lampshades. When the lights come on, they resemble the solemn and dignified offering of lamps before a Buddha. In cultural and creative design, the cultural connotations of the lotus—symbolizing purity and wisdom—are retained, while creating new user experiences in modern life scenarios, allowing traditional symbols to be rejuvenated in contemporary design contexts.

3. Analysis of Leshan Regional Cultural Symbol System

3.1 Natural Landscape Symbols

The Leshan Giant Buddha, as the world's tallest stone-carved Buddha statue, embodies not only exquisite sculpting techniques but also carries profound symbolic meanings of "majesty" and "protection." For a thousand years, it has stood quietly at the confluence of three rivers, becoming a spiritual symbol in the hearts of Leshan residents for warding off floods and safeguarding peace. Its awe-inspiring image is deeply etched in the cultural consciousness of the public. The sea of clouds and Golden Summit on Mount Emei, with their ethereal and mysterious presence, create an extraordinary and transcendent atmosphere, symbolizing "paradise" and "Zen." In creative design,

digital rendering can transform the dynamic surging clouds into abstract graphics, or use light and shadow effects to simulate the sacred glow of the Golden Summit at sunrise, integrating natural wonders into modern life in innovative ways. Additionally, the rich symbolic system of Mount Emei includes visual symbols such as the sacred halo of the Golden Summit Buddha, the surging and turbulent sea of clouds, and lively monkey groups; the unique texture of Mount Emei's basalt and the marvels formed by karst topography constitute the unique geological symbols of Leshan, providing diverse materials for creative design.

Leshan's rich Buddhist heritage has nurtured a wealth of cultural symbols. Temples such as Baoguo Temple and Wannian Temple, with their intricate dougong structures and upturned eaves, not only showcase the superb ancient architectural techniques but also embody the solemnity and elegance of Buddhist culture. These architectural elements, after being simplified and refined, can be applied to bookmarks, stationery, and other cultural and creative products, endowing them with a unique Eastern aesthetic charm. Buddhist ritual instruments like wooden fish and bells are not only important tools in religious ceremonies; their shapes and sounds also possess unique cultural appeal. Designing the form of a wooden fish into modern home decor or integrating the rhythm of bells and drums into smart alarm clocks can breathe new life into traditional Buddhist symbols in contemporary living scenarios. Moreover, exquisite Buddhist sculptures such as the Giant Buddha and the Thousand-Armed Guanyin, along with ritual objects like bells, drums, and wooden fish, are significant carriers of Buddhist cultural dissemination and offer vast potential for development in cultural and creative design.

3.2 Folk Culture Symbols

The ethnic minority cultures and traditional crafts of Leshan together form a unique system of folk cultural symbols. The Yi ethnic group's clothing patterns are characterized by rich geometric designs, which often embody the ethnic beliefs, totems, and historical stories of the people. Applying these patterns to fashion items such as scarves and clothing not only showcases the unique charm of ethnic culture but also meets modern consumers' pursuit of personalized aesthetics. The New Year paintings of Jiajiang are renowned for their vibrant colors, exaggerated compositions, and auspicious meanings. Their traditional art form can be integrated into poster and packaging designs, adding a strong sense of regional culture to the works. Additionally, the Bimo culture of the Yi people reflects ancient culture and wisdom, embodying the craftsmanship and life wisdom of the people of Leshan. These are highly valuable folk cultural symbols with significant development potential.

3.3 Food Culture Symbols

Leshan's culinary culture has a long and rich history, forming highly representative symbols of its food culture. The Kick-Feet Beef, with its fresh, fragrant, and rich broth, as well as a diverse combination of ingredients, has become the golden brand of Leshan cuisine. Its steaming hot scene and unique cooking methods can be transformed into elements for cultural and creative illustrations and tableware design. Xiba Tofu is renowned for its delicate and tender texture and varied cooking techniques. From the pristine white color of the tofu to its post-cooking shape, it can inspire creative products such as bookmarkers shaped like tofu or aprons printed with tofu dish patterns, bringing culinary culture into everyday life in an entertaining way.

3.4 Historical Symbols

The historical relics of Leshan bear the memory and sediment of time. The Majiao Cliff Tombs,

as a cluster of Han Dynasty tombs, showcase the exquisite stone carvings and unique tomb structures that reflect the social landscape and funeral culture of ancient Leshan. Their historical charm can be recreated through 3D printing, cultural models, and other forms. The numerous Buddha statues carved in Jiajiang's Thousand Buddha Rock display the artistic styles of different periods, with their shapes and carving textures suitable for use in jewelry, decorative paintings, and other cultural products. Luocheng Ancient Town is renowned for its unique boat-shaped street layout, where the ancient architecture and leisurely scenes of daily life provide rich material for photography, painting, and cultural design. The ancient city walls of Jiazhou bear witness to Leshan's historical changes; their heavy bricks and weathered walls can be abstracted into pattern elements, integrated into city souvenirs, stationery, and other designs, evoking people's nostalgia for history and attachment to their hometown.

4. Practice Path of Cultural and Creative Application Design in Leshan

4.1 Extraction and Classification of Cultural Symbols

Firstly, establishing a database of Leshan cultural symbols is the foundation for conducting creative design. By organizing professional teams to conduct field surveys across Leshan, using methods such as image documentation, literature research, and folk interviews, we comprehensively collect symbolic materials from natural and cultural domains, including the Leshan Giant Buddha, Mount Emei, Yi ethnic culture, and Jiajiang New Year paintings. Utilizing digital technology, we create 3D models of physical cultural heritage sites like the Mahao Cliff Tombs carvings and the architectural components of Baoguo Temple. We also transform intangible cultural heritages, such as the beef skewer cooking process and Mucuan grass weaving techniques, into dynamic visuals. This builds a diverse database that includes images, videos, audio, and models, providing rich resources for subsequent designs.

Secondly, categorizing symbols based on visual characteristics, cultural connotations, and application scenarios can achieve precise design positioning. Visual characteristic classification can distinguish concrete images such as the outline of the Leshan Giant Buddha and the dynamic monkey groups on Mount Emei from abstract textures like sea clouds and geometric patterns of Buddhist lotus flowers; cultural connotation classification focuses on the spiritual meanings behind the symbols, for example, categorizing the "protection of peace" symbol of the Leshan Giant Buddha and the "blessing and good fortune" symbol of the Jiajiang New Year paintings separately; application scenario classification divides symbols according to the needs of cultural and creative products, such as temple architectural symbols suitable for home decoration and Yi ethnic pattern symbols fitting fashionable attire, making designs more targeted.

Thirdly, selecting core symbols with high recognizability and strong representativeness is key to enhancing the competitiveness of cultural and creative products. In the field of natural landscapes, the head shape of the Leshan Giant Buddha and the Ten Directions Samantabhadra Statue on Mount Emei have become iconic visual symbols due to their widespread recognition; in folk culture, the "blessings, rank, longevity, and happiness" theme patterns of Jiajiang New Year paintings and the fire-pattern totems of Yi ethnic clothing stand out for their distinct cultural characteristics. After refinement, these core symbols can serve as central elements in cultural and creative design, enhancing the regional cultural identity of the product.

4.2 Design of Symbolic Semantic Translation

Formal translation endows cultural symbols with modern aesthetic value through the transformation from concrete to abstract graphics. Taking the Leshan Giant Buddha as an example,

its complete statue can be simplified into smooth geometric outlines, or partial features such as the Buddha's gestures and facial features can be artistically transformed for use in creative products like phone cases and notebook covers. This translation retains the cultural core of the symbol while meeting the contemporary consumer's demand for minimalist and fashionable aesthetics.

Material translation emphasizes the combination of traditional and modern materials, bringing unique textures to cultural and creative products. When designing a Leshan-themed cultural and creative lamp, Jiajiang bamboo paper is used as the lampshade material, showcasing the delicate texture of traditional papermaking techniques. Paired with a metal frame and LED light source, the warmth of traditional bamboo paper contrasts sharply with the coolness of modern metal. Meanwhile, through intelligent dimming technology, it simulates the light and shadow changes of the cloud sea on Mount Emei, achieving a fusion of traditional culture and modern technology.

Functional translation drives the transformation of cultural and creative products from mere aesthetics to practicality. It converts the dynamic beauty of the cloud sea in Mount Emei into functional designs for creative stationery, such as pen holders shaped like surging clouds, which are both decorative and capable of securely holding multiple pens; it integrates the culinary elements of skewered beef into tableware design, shaping bowls and plates to mimic the form of beef soup pots and ingredients, allowing users to experience Leshan's culinary culture while dining, thereby enhancing the utility value and cultural experience of these products.

5. Conclusion

In the thriving era of cultural and creative industries, semiotics theory stands as a lighthouse, guiding the systematic and scientific methodology for designing cultural and creative products in Leshan. The rich natural landscapes, profound Buddhist culture, vibrant folk customs, and unique culinary heritage of Leshan form a vast and precious repository of cultural symbols. By establishing a database of cultural symbols and scientifically categorizing core symbols, combined with semantic translation design from multiple dimensions such as form, material, and function, not only can we deeply explore the spiritual connotations behind these cultural symbols, but also endow them with contemporary aesthetic expressions through innovative design language. This ensures that cultural and creative products not only carry the thousand-year-old historical and cultural heritage of Leshan but also possess commercial value that meets modern market demands, truly achieving an organic unity of traditional culture and modern design, cultural inheritance and market benefits.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by 2023 Leshan City Philosophy and Social Science Fund Project Conclusion: Leshan Regional Cultural Tourism Symbol Organization and Analysis (SKL2023D25); Cross Himalayan Research Center Sponsorship Project; Leshan Normal University Digital Art and Cultural Creativity Research Center Sponsorship.

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