

Derivation of Image Design from Social Backgrounds: A Case Study of Community Tourist Flea Market

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0126

The European Conference on Arts & Humanities 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

Through the motivation of community leader, Ladmayom Market has become well-known and has potential to be a creative tourist market. Designing visual identity to represent its names, reputations, and personalities is crucial. Prior to design visual identity, positioning the market's direction must be done through participatory process by public meeting and field survey for different group of stakeholder. The direction of Ladmayom Market was the main agendum of public meeting convened by land owners, merchants, and community leader. The participants voted "local floating market with creative idea products" as the market's direction. Since the customers did not join the meeting, field survey was made to ensure the involvement of all stakeholders. The result confirmed the innovative growth under community unchanged life styles. From the opted direction, seven preliminary themes were designed and presented to the same group of participants in the second meeting. The preference of customers was collected from field survey to substantiate that most stakeholders have the same absolute emotional perception. Subsequently, eight identity/image designs were developed based on the preferred themes, and were presented in third meeting. Due to social background difference between stakeholders and designers, the content in final identity/image has totally shifted from internationalized abstract theme to local image. Most stakeholders are not learning in design field, and their perception and interpretation are straightforward. Thus, the message content is delivered in a very localized understandable form which is appropriate for both message sender and receiver.

Keywords: Identity/image, perception, interpretation, social backgrounds, participatory process.

Introduction

Ladmayom Market locates in Bangkok which was named "Venice of the East" because of numerous canals dividing the city into separate patches of land. The name of the canal, Ladmayom, has become a "geographical identification" of this market inside the orchard community. Ladmayom is composed of two Thai words: lad and Mayom. "Lad" means short cut whereas "Mayom" refers to a "star gooseberry", scientifically termed as *Phyllanthus acidus* (L.) Skeels¹, which is typically planted in the front of most houses in Thailand because Thai's believe that planting Mayom in front of their houses would bring fame, success, and good relationship from neighbors and co-workers to their home members². Thai monks use Mayom branches to sprinkle consecrated water on persons or places as a sort of ritual purification³. Nowadays, Mayom trees are hardly seen in Ladmayom orchard area due to their fruits are sour, so it is no longer an economic goods. In addition, the orchards along the canal are abundant with flowers like orchids, seasonal fruits and vegetables.

In the beginning, Ladmayom Market was a one-man project to preserve a homeland environment. It originated when the community leader had started the project by collecting garbage along Ladmayom canal. Characterized as reserved people, the Ladmayom villagers are friendly and helpful not only with each other but also with the strangers. This sparked an idea for the community leader to persuade the villagers to sell their orchard products: fruits, vegetables, and flowers so as to gain additional income, and to join creative activities around their community on weekends. When the community was ready to sustain towards further pace, he conjoined Ladmayom community market with the local administration tourism network, the Talingchan floating market network. In that case, Ladmayom Market became known to the public as his basic objective to gain outsiders' stimulation for environmental preservation project on the basis of the villagers' campaign and goal for a clean canal.

Motivated by the community leader's aim, the market is idealized as a "floating market of merit without cigarettes, liquor and beer being sold". Orchard goods and provisions on floating boats are sold along Ladmayom canal whereas luxury items are sold on land along the canal side, categorized as the tourist flea market type⁴. Regarded as a niche market for a specific target group, Ladmayom Market has had a potential to sustain their orchard life style and develop into a creative tourist market. In order to reach the goal, the market should have a certain identity and display it. Before getting that the direction should be skimmed out of the stakeholders: land owners, merchants, customers, villagers, and community leader. Therefore, the academic persons are drawn into the scene to steer them towards their desired direction.

Objective

The research aims to set position and future goal of Ladmayom Market. The research outcome is helped Ladmayom Market develop identity/image.

Methods

The following methods are used:

1. Literature review
2. Participatory process is undertaken by the stakeholders through public meeting, and field survey to find

- market position and future goal prior to create an effective brand/image or identity of the business, product, and service as positioning and future direction are primary business goal.
- identity/image of Ladmayom Market by land owners, merchants, customers, villagers, and community leader with the help of research team.
- redesign identity/image according to comments and suggestions.

3. Conclusion

Literature Review

This paper has reviewed the data base⁵ from the early step of research for continuing participatory process to obtain the final outcome of the market's image. Data from questionnaires have shown that most of the Ladmayom Market's merchants live around the community. They travel not more than 10 kilometers distance to sell their goods at Ladmayom Market as their side-line job. The merchants are the lower middle class group classified according to their income and working age range, 21-50 years old. A little over one-tenth of merchants are high-school-educated individuals while the rest have higher education.

Whilst three quarters of customers coming to the market are casual customers, a quarter of those are regular customers. Ladmayom Market's customers are mostly from afar; they travel 10-20 kilometers to the market. The customers are also the lower middle class group that is categorized according to their income. Less than one-tenth of the customers are high-school-educated individuals while the rest have higher education. Ladmayom's customers are all ages including working people and family group, elderly, children, teenagers and students. These groups of people are concerned about market's location, the merchant's disposition, variety of goods, shop location, shop decoration, and merchant's reputation. Many customers get pleasure from the activities such as horse riding, row boat trip to view the orchard and the temple along the river, walking tour to see the old house in the orchard scenery, teaching English to interested people, listening to a sermon on the day of the match, feeding a buffalo, and book reading in the informal library.

Ladmayom Market's strong points are its location, the community cooperation and good purpose of all villagers to sustain a good environment, and beautiful scenic clean canal around the community. The weak point is the gradual decline of their good endeavor and intention caused by the new expansion area by other seven owners. However, this has been persisted for a short time. As a result, the market community can still compromise with each other. Community involvement in the form of participatory process must be pushed to sustain the market towards further pace because "Participatory Processes are specific methods employed to achieve active participation by all members of a group in a decision making process. The approach can be used for most issues and should give equal opportunities for everybody involved. The primary goal is to create productive discussions to develop positive solutions. Method selection is depend on what the participants want to achieve, as each method employs different processes and outcomes. Each method should be viewed holistically as a certain way of thinking, rather than as an individual tool." ⁶

Part of the participatory process utilized by the research team is adapted from The Weave - Participatory Process Design Guide for Strategic Sustainable Development (v1)⁷. It can guide the market community to reach a definite conclusion of their future through public dialogues. Most Thais are reticent or reserved, so the dialogue opening

- Where you want to go
- keeping local villagers and orchard community and earning additional income on weekends

The research team created preliminary image themes for stakeholders' considerations and suggestions in this public meeting by using the data collected from the field survey on Ladmayom Market's highlights. Seven themes were designed in two types of logograms: concept-related graphic symbol and image-related graphic symbol. Concept-related graphic symbols are themes 1 and 5 while image-related graphic symbols are themes 2, 3, 4, and 7. They are as shown in Image 1.



Image 1 - Preliminary design of identity/image for Ladmayom Market

Theme 1: Paper wind propeller in the water that is shaped like a small row boat and lettering with market's name; Theme 2: Star gooseberry fruit as symbol of the name of this canal on small row boat; Theme 3: Top view of merchants with thatch hats on three small row boats; Theme 4: Leaves on blue background and lettering with market's name; Theme 5: Paper boat floating on water and lettering with market's name; Theme 6: Leaves and lettering with market's name; Theme 7: Top view of merchant with thatch hat on small row boat and lettering with market's name. The color schemes on all themes are selected from elements in the surrounding such as blue from water, green from tree, orange from ripe fruit or falling leaves, and brown from tree trunk.

Fifty one representatives of the stakeholders in the second public meeting were made up of land owners, merchants, and community leader. They discussed, selected, and suggested ideas to develop the images. For future development, they chose themes 1, 4, and 5. The discussion revealed that theme 1 and theme 5 represented their contexts with old-fashioned handmade toys played during childhood. These traditional toys could represent their unchanged life styles. Theme 4 simply represented water and trees in the area. Since the customers did not join this meeting, their perceptions were collected through a field survey on identity/image to have the same absolute emotional perception.

Hence, the result from identity/image field survey showed that 41.93 percent of Ladmayom Market stakeholders (land owners, merchants, and customers) preferred theme 5; 22.83 percent preferred theme 1, and 12.99 percent preferred theme 4. This result is identical with the outcome in second public meeting. Thus, the research team developed the identity/image according to the recommendations arising from the second public meeting. Image 2 shows the redesign of theme 1 and theme 5, the combination of theme 1 and theme 5, and the combination of theme 3 and theme 5.



Design 1



Design 2

Design 1 and 2 are the redesign of theme 1.



Design 3



Design 4

Design 3 and 4 are the combination of theme 1 and theme 5.



Design 5



Design 6

Design 5 and 6 are the combination of theme 3-theme 5.



Design 7



Design 8

Design 7 is the redesign of theme 5. Design 8 is the combination of theme 1 and theme 5.

Image 2 - Design development of identity/image for Ladmayom Market

The third public meeting was organized to gather comments for market's identity/image. From forty six participants, the popular choice was design 5 while the result from field survey showed designs 5, 6, 7, and 4 with corresponding percentages of 27.45, 23.53, 17.65, and 15.69 respectively. Design 5 was selected among the eight designs as the main idea to develop. The message that the participants would like to convey to the public is the "soft and easy life" along the canal in the orchard community. The stakeholder group who represented in the meeting recommended the inclusion of star gooseberry in the image to emphasize geographical identification. The community leader insisted to use the kind of row boat with thatch roof since Ladmayom Market is the only floating market that remains to use this kind of boat. After two new design development and consultations with land owners and community leader, the design was finalized. It is as shown in Image 3.



Image 3 - Final identity/image design for Ladmayom Market

Conclusion

Social backgrounds play an important part through out the image design process. At the open session of participatory process, The Circle (TC) was conducted differently because of social background in Eastern way, especially on Thai society. Most of the Thai people are reserved due to Thai social norms, seniority and respect, education system, and social status classified by income, and occupation. Therefore, the dialogue in The Circle (TC) which is composed of land owners, merchants, and community leader is not as broad as it should be. Instead of giving ideas young participants, low income participants, and low respected occupation classes listen silently. They discussed among themselves and privately gave their ideas to the participatory process facilitator. This is an ordinary Thai social norm which became a solid social background in the past and still continues until today. However, this tradition made a gradual change in the past twenty years⁸. Thus, many of very young generations these days are not as reticent as those past generations.

The final identity/image of Ladmayom Market started with preliminary internationalized abstract themes. After brainstorming and discussion process, the final design became an authentic representation of the floating market with the geographical identification and name on it. However, the preliminary design themes 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 were designed by architecture and interior architecture students while the themes 1 and 5 were designed by communication design students. Themes 2, 3 and 7 contained the top view of merchant with thatch hat on small row boat, which is difficult to be recognized by the general public. These are the language for architecture and interior architecture professions. Hence, the percentage of selection for themes 2, 3 and 7 was less: 6.10 percent, 4.72 percent, and 5.51 percent respectively. Thus, it had proven that even in the related professions like architecture, interior architecture, and communication design, the design metaphors were contextually different in terms of communication language and perception in which each profession commonly used. In this case, the social backgrounds of different types of designers were attributed to their education field and experiences in image designing.

Two out of three selected preliminary themes: themes 1, 4, and 5 designed by the students taking communication design course. They were more familiar with image design than the architecture and interior architecture students. Nonetheless, these themes 1 and 5 were replicates so that someone who might not be familiar with them could not remember and could not understand them. Considering the drawback, the final design was mainly developed out of combining themes 5 and 4 together. The reposeful atmosphere, veritable posture of the merchant with thatch hat plus the star gooseberry leaves signifying the geographical identification, was the choice of Ladmayom Market's stakeholders and closely related to the community. Their design perspective was captured from reality with their different social backgrounds from that of the designer. Most of them have not been indulged in design field, and their life experiences in perception and interpretation are simplicity. By this case, the content is delivered to its destination in a common and localized understandable but non-attractive form which seems to be suitable to the sender and the receiver although it does not appear as an internationalized image/identity.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to express their gratitude to their research assistants namely Mr.Terdpong Boonpan and Ms.Edna Aclan-Abrao for their untiring support and efforts as valuable contributions in materializing the research.

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Notes

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