


# Chapter 9

## The Influence of Culture on Visual Design Interpretation: A Pinterest–Based Study

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### ABSTRACT

*In design, visual elements go beyond aesthetics, as culture deeply influences how people interpret imagery. Cognitive theories show that perceptions of visual stimuli are shaped by cultural backgrounds and experiences, leading to varying interpretations of colors, symbols, and forms. Ethnographic research helps explore these cultural differences. This study analyzes Pinterest content, examining cultural interpretations of design elements like color and symbols. Findings suggest that cultural values significantly affect how visuals are perceived and engaged with globally.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Through conscious planning, design is viewed as developing aesthetic, functional, and ergonomic solutions to meet needs. This concept describes the idea and the tools employed to reveal it (Barnard, 2002, p.92). The design process encountered in daily life consists of a versatile structure that includes the emergence of new ideas during creative processes, the provision of functionality, visually appealing user engagement, and the generation of solutions to problems. Culture, which plays an important role in our perception and evaluation of a world surrounded by visual stimuli, is a decisive factor in the design process concerning aesthetics and functionality. Cultural perception is a concept that explains how individuals and societies perceive, interpret, and make sense of the world. This perception is shaped by the culture in which one is born, grows, and lives (Hall, 1982). From changes in color usage to differentiation of symbols, and from variations in material preferences to user experiences, culture significantly impacts design processes. For example, in China, people in the south prefer brighter colors, while those in the north prefer softer colors (Marcus, 2005, p.6).

Individual creativity, cultural codes, and the psychology of perception shape the design process. Culture, comprising values, beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles that influence a society, impacts every stage of this process. On one hand, while shaping the cultural design process, design adds a new dimension by reflecting society's identity and value judgments. At this point, a two-way relationship exists between culture and design, with each influencing and transforming the other. Cultural determinism is the theory that human behavior, thoughts, and values are significantly shaped by the culture in which people live. According to this perspective, individuals' artistic and design habits and perceptions are formed within cultural heritage and social norms (Oyserman & Lee, 2020). Cultural determinants directly influence how design objects are understood and how users interpret them. These determinants are crucial regarding color and shape, material selection, user experience, and ergonomics. Perception occurs when sensory information is organized according to an individual's mental structure and cultural background (Goldstein & Brockmole, 2016). This approach suggests that the whole constitutes a different and more meaningful structure than merely the sum of its parts. In the perception process, individuals grasp information holistically rather than evaluating the elements they encounter as independent components. Individuals from different cultural backgrounds may perceive and process the same visual information differently due to cultural variations. For example, while analytical perception dominates Western societies, holistic perception is more prevalent in Eastern societies (Nisbett, 2019).

The effect of cultural perception on design is significantly observed in the perception of color and form. Since the use of color carries different meanings due to

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