

INTEGRATING RELATIONSHIP OF THE FIVE ELEMENTS IN CREATING PRODUCT DESIGN OF INTERIOR DECORATIVE SOUVENIRS

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Abstract - The objectives of this research are 1) to study the context and concepts associated with shapes, colors and materials in the five elements of feng shui and design principles applied to the design and development of home furnishings. 2) To present the product design of interior decorative souvenir in relations to the five elements of feng shui and principles of design elements. The sample consisted of 400 Bangkok residents. The data on design were obtained and evaluated by 3 design experts to assess the suitability of the model for the integration of the principles of five elements. The research methods can be divided into two main steps as follows: 1) to study the relationship of the five elements principles in feng shui and design principles. Information are gathered from documents to find basic concepts, principles, theories, and processes. Data from the field survey are aimed at studying patterns and compare products, interviews and data analysis. 2) The data were analyzed and applied in developing product design, creating product design, making prototype and product evaluation and then analyze the value of the design and propose the product model. The results showed that: 1) the component that can best associate to the five elements is color. The five elements influence the decision to purchase the product. Adding auspicious meaning of the five elements can help to increase the value to the product. 2) Products evaluated by design experts are product no. 1, no. 6 and no. 9. These products designed according to the five elements principle are evaluated to be the highest level. The materials and process were appropriate. The researcher found that applying knowledge of the main principles of five elements by incorporating the theory to the principles of design elements within the environment can be developed to integrate creative souvenir decorative products and to add value to the products as well.

Keywords - Five elements, feng shui, design principles, interior decorative souvenirs.

I. INTRODUCTION

The five elements are the basis of the intellectual antecedents in the past comprising water, wood, fire, earth, and metal, in relation to the selection and improvement of the physical environment in various fields such as selection of strategic location, residential or business areas. It is believed that they would bring fortune to people practicing it. For example, the position of the different rooms in the house, the kitchen usually symbolizes fire because cooking is related to heat so the position of the kitchen should in the position of wood because wood is the element that will enhance the energy to fire. The direction for wood element is the east. This corresponds with architectural design principles since the east is the most suitable direction for any kitchen because there will be appropriate sunlight and gentle breeze in the morning. It is considered a great direction for peace and prosperity. The location receives the least heat from the sun, especially in the afternoon. Moreover, in the east is appropriate in terms of ventilation. The wind will blow in such direction and therefore take the unpleasant smell from cooking to the outside of the house [8][9]. It is therefore believed that the east is a direction that is favorable to the position of the kitchen that would be beneficial to the residents.

The main principle of the five elements concerns the forms and the modification of energy to achieve an energy balance. If the combination of energy proportion is different, it will create different

elements. Each element can cause destruction, exhaustion and fortune. These reactions are referred to as "cycle of element change" which various phenomena occur. The transition cycle is governed by the laws of the elements. The knowledge of this balance is believed to bring fortune to the environment [5][11]. The five elements or elements in feng shui are not only referred to the named elements alone, but also refers to a stage or appearance related and associated with elements as well, such as shapes, colors, and directions. Such principles may lead to the balance to change accordingly to create production, destruction, transfer and fortune [6][2].

This research is aimed at finding ways to create Thai community product design to make them unique and attractive by adding meaningful story and emotional value on top of the design and functionality of products, and promote local heritage to the next generation.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To study the context and concepts associated with shapes, colors and materials in the five elements and design principles applied to the design and development of home furnishings.
2. To present the product design of home decorative souvenir in relations to the five elements and principles of design elements.

III. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The researcher collected both primary and secondary data including field survey. After the data were analyzed, the design process and product development were conducted following these steps.

1. Study the context and concepts associated with shapes, colors and materials in the five elements and design principles including the auspicious meaning of the five elements and their uses.

1.1 Collect data and review literature on related topics

1.2 Survey, interview and obtain information from questionnaire

1.3 Analyze & evaluate data from part 1 and 2

Data collection is classified into two major categories.

1. Primary data is obtained from the field survey of the area by means of the following.

1.1 Collect, survey and take note on home decor products from entrepreneurs and distributing venues such as products exhibition to be evaluated.

1.2 Interview and inquire the interior designers and buyers about the opinion on the five elements.

2. Secondary data are compiled from documents, research papers, and other sources both in Thailand and overseas.

Data Analysis

1. Community decorative products were studied and presented in the form of photos. The products that are in being developed were presented in narrative description.

2. Decorative souvenir products buyers' opinion were studied. First, general information and behavior of buyers were analyzed. Frequency and percentage were calculated. Then factors in product purchasing decision were compared.

3. The result from analysis was applied to the development of community product design using the five elements principle.

3.1 Summarizing the result from analysis for the development of product design

3.2 Developing product design

3.3 Evaluating by 3 experts in design related fields.

3.4 Concluding and suggesting ways to develop Interior Decorative Souvenirs in the future.

Tools

The characteristics of the instruments used in data collection are observation, interview, survey and data collection on forms and patterned by photos and audio recordings. Tools in research consist of the following.

1. Survey

2. Questionnaire and interview

3. Camera and voice recorder

Location

Community souvenirs product operating venues and souvenir shops for tourists in Bangkok and other tourist attraction provinces.

Participants

Tourists, general public with average to high income

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It can be summarized from 400 questionnaires [10] about the information on the principles of five elements to be used in the design for consumers that the sample group of 400 participants consisted of 158 male and 242 female aged between 31-50 years. 148 are private company employees and 120 are businesspeople amounting to 37% and 30% respectively. Most participants, 135 of them, have income ranging from 20,001 to 30,000 baht, while 128 people have incomes between 30,001-50,000 Baht amounting to 33.75%, and 32% respectively. Majority of them, 194 people, graduated university level representing 48.5%.

A survey found that 212 participants have knowledge of the five elements in product design, representing 63% have ever bought souvenir with auspicious meanings explaining that the features are able to convey the auspicious meaning according to the five elements are colors, shapes, materials / textures and patterns respectively. Asked if the five elements influenced their decision to purchase souvenirs, most of the participants agreed so, followed by average and no influence on the decision to buy the products respectively. 89.5% think that applying the five elements principle to the development of decorative souvenir design is appropriate, followed by 45% who pointed that the five elements should be applied to the products as souvenirs during the festive seasons, and 33%, respectively. When asked whether if the five elements helps adding value to the products, 41% agreed and 23% strongly agreed.

Most products in the market are similar format with no variety. They are usually often based on the belief, amulets or idols instead of adopting of the principle of five elements [11]. However, there are some products that have applied the five and can be a good case study, for example, Lucky Fountain Lamp and Lucky Dragon Lamp – products from Feng Shui Research Institute of Thailand [6], and Lucky Aroma Lamp. These products applied the element that conveys an auspicious meaning linking to the law of the five elements [2][7].

Designing home decor souvenirs linked to the five elements principle:

1. Design Element Theory and the five elements principle

The five element principle consists metal, water, earth, wood and fire in relationship with colors, shapen and materials that symbolize or represent each element as shown intable 1.

Table 1 Relation of the five elements principle and design elements [4][8]

Element	Design elements		
	Colors	Shape	Materials
Wood	Green, green tones	Rectangular, long	Wood, wood products, paper
Fire	Red, pink, red tones	Triangle, acute	Plastic, petrochemical
Earth	Brown, yellow	Square, horizontal	Clay, stone, ceramics
Metal	White, grey, gold, glittering colors	Round, curvy, oval	Iron, metal, gold, ore
Water	Blue, black	Wavy	Sand, glass

Auspicious meanings of each element was as follows [5][8].

- 1. Metal :** protection, expansion and center
- 2. Water :** freedom, fluidity, movement, wisdom and fortune
- 3. Wood :** nobility, knowledge and prosperity
- 4. Fire:** acuity, target, fastness
- 5. Earth:** Security, discipline and steadiness

2. Principles of interior environment

Directions and positions Directions and positions affect the internal environment of the residences because directions are the energy receiving spots. Directions and positions are also related to eight trigrams that divided positions in the residences into 9 parts which corresponds with 8 directions plus the center of the residence totaling 9 parts as shown in the Fig.2. and it is often called a BaGua Map [1].

4 WoodXU N.Yin SE	9 FireLLYI n South	2 EarthKU N.Yin SW
3Wood.Z HENYan g East	5Fire- Earth Center	7 MetalDU I.Yin West
8 EarthGE N.Yang NE	1 WaterK AN.Yang North	6 MetalQI AN.Yang NW

Fig.1Directions and positions in BaGua Map

Cycle of element change: There are three cycles that exist between these five elements as shown in the Fig.1[5].

- 1. Formation cycle** is a positive transformation of the energies and creating new elements. This cycle is used to enhance energy to the desired element.
- 2. Destructive cycle** is the cycle where the elements destroy or control one another.
- 3. Transplantation cycle** is the cycle where the elements exhaust or reduce other elements. It is the opposite of the formation cycle.

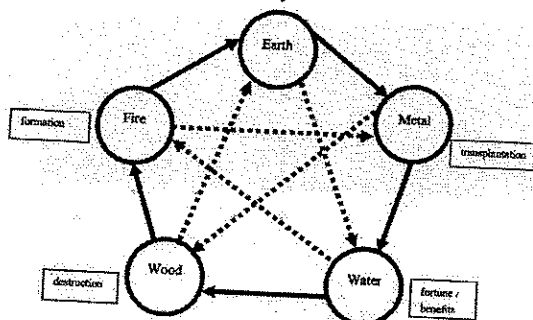


Fig.2. Cycle of element change

When combine the two concepts, the desired design can be created. In addition, product design can be developed by integrating the two theories.

The product has been designed in 9 parts (8 directions + 1 position) in accordance with the position and direction of the BaGua. For every part of the product there are 3 patterns. Thus, there are 27 pieces in total. They are evaluated by experts to select the best of each direction of the residence. These are 9 pieces that were received the highest evaluation.



Fig.3 The product has been designed in 9 parts in accordance with the position and direction of the residences.

After that, these 9 pieces were designed in details and evaluated by the experts again. The top 3 products that received the highest evaluation in the five elements principle, aim to add the value in products, beauty & aesthetics and function & usage were as follow:

1. Product prototype no.1 : The Lamp for the north for the position no.1

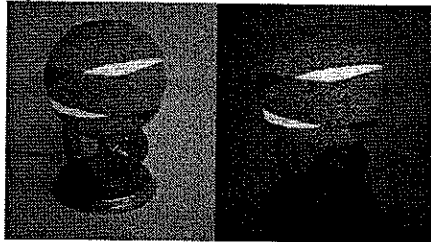


Fig.4 The Lamp for the north

2. Product prototype no.6 : The Clock for the northwest for the position no.6

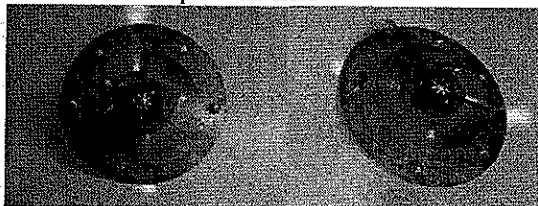


Fig.5 The Lamp for the northwest

3. Product prototype no.9 : The Lamp for the south for the position no. 9



Fig.6 The Lamp for the south

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study showed that the five elements had an influence in decision to purchase souvenirs [2] and the majority of the sample group thought that integrating relationship of the five elements of feng shui and design principles can add value to the products. The creating product design of interior decorative souvenirs was also linked with the principles below [1][5][6].

1. Relationship of design principle and the five elements of feng shui in colors, shapes & form , materials and auspicious meanings
2. Principles of interior environment design consisted of
 - 2.1 Directions and position
 - 2.2 Cycle of five element change in Feng Shi

SUGGESTION OF THE STUDY

From the current research in relationship between shapes, colors and materials, according to the five

elements principles and design principles, it was found that the integration is efficient. Here are some suggestions to be considered.

1. The study findings show that the ancient wisdom applied to achieve innovation. Therefore, it is vital to preserve the wisdom of the past and appreciate that it can be used to develop valuable of the works both physically and conceptually.
2. The knowledge gained from this research can be further developed and applied to create products and souvenirs.
3. In order to achieve the most effective results, adjustment of position, direction and timing is necessary. The test of the effectiveness requires a fairly long time. Hence, there should be supported for studies, research and experiments on this matter.
4. There should be more research in order to develop and enhance the knowledge of entrepreneurs in the sustainable design methods and processes in the future.

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