

# A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE EMOTIONAL TURN IN UNIVERSITY IDENTITY SYSTEM (UIS)

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## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## ABSTRACT

As an important means to enhance the comprehensive strength and competitiveness of universities, the importance of University Identity System (UIS) is becoming more and more prominent with the development of higher education. Traditional UIS is facing homogenisation and other problems in China, making it difficult to meet the higher demands for "spirit" and "temperature" of university teachers, students and the public in the new era. Emotional design, as a design method emphasising personal perception and emotional appeal, is gradually becoming a new direction for the innovative development of UIS. This research aims to analyze the evolution, composition system and research hotspots of the university image identity system, and explores the academic and rational connection between it and emotional design, aiming to explore the cultural characteristics of the university through this contact method, and finally apply it to corporate image design. In this paper, we firstly review the development history, theoretical foundation and current research status of University Identity System (UIS) at home and abroad, and then analyse the research process and main theories of emotional design, especially the three-level theory proposed by Donald A. Norman. This research mainly adopts qualitative research methods. Finally, the intrinsic connection between UIS and affective design is discussed, and it is pointed out that affective design acts on the visual identification (VI), behavioural identification (BI) and conceptual identification (MI) of UIS through the instinctive level, the behavioural level and the reflective level, respectively, to construct the uniqueness of the university's image and the sense of identity with the goal of emotional resonance. The purpose of this paper is to provide theoretical support and practical guidance for the emotional shift of UIS under the threshold of multidisciplinary perspectives, and to promote the innovation and breakthrough of image recognition of Chinese universities in the construction cycle of "double first-class".

**Keywords:** University Identity System, UIS, Emotional Design

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## INTRODUCTION

With the popularisation and development of higher education in the world, the competition among universities is becoming more and more intense. Shaping a good image is an important part of the university's comprehensive strength, and also an important factor reflecting the university's competitiveness and cohesion. UIS (University Identity System), through the comprehensive design of multiple subsystems such as school philosophy, behavioural styles, and visual norms, uses the overall expression to help the university communicate to the audience as a group with a unified image. Through the design of multiple sub-systems, such as school philosophy, behavioural style and visual norms, the overall expression of the system helps the university to convey a unified image to the audience, which in a certain period of time contributes to the formation of the university image. Especially in the 20 years since its introduction to China, UIS has gradually become the "standard" of Chinese universities. However, the multiple changes in technology, media and society at this stage have also caused many "incompatibility" phenomena of UIS, such as the homogenisation of the visual image, which is restricted by the framework.

The transformation of society has influenced changes in people's needs. In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), it is stated that the main contradiction in Chinese society has changed from "the people's growing material and cultural needs" to "the people's growing needs for a better life". The audience of Chinese universities, represented by students, faculty, alumni and the public, also expects a UIS that focuses more on "spirit" and "temperature". Emotional design is a design method that emphasises personal perception and emotional appeal, and seeks to trigger the emotional resonance of users through visual and sensory elements. It seeks to trigger users' emotional resonance through visual and sensory elements. This design approach, which focuses on the user's emotional experience, can satisfy the user's material needs as well as emotional needs, and has achieved remarkable success in product development, information interaction and spatial design. Therefore, it is an important and dynamic research direction for Chinese universities in the "double first-class" construction cycle to carry out research on UIS in the new period of fundamental contradiction transformation under the threshold of multidisciplinary perspectives, and to give full play to the important role of emotions in conveying ideas, gathering people's hearts and shaping images.

### Research Objectives

This research aims to analyze the evolution, composition system and research hotspots of the university image identity system, and explores the academic and rational connection between it and emotional design, aiming to explore the cultural characteristics of the university through this contact method, and finally apply it to corporate image design.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

### The evolution of University Identity System

UIS is based on CIS (Corporate Identity System, that is, the corporate image recognition system) borrowed and improved, to fully understand UIS, you need to have a comprehensive knowledge of the development of CIS closely related to the history of CIS. CIS is the product of fierce competition between enterprises caused by the development of social and economic development, and has roughly gone through four stages: The first stage "prototype stage" appeared in the early 20th century in Western Europe, in 1907, the German General Electric Company AEG adopted the AEG three-letter image designed by Peter Behrens as the enterprise's logo, and will be applied to a series of product packaging, office supplies and publicity supplies, etc., creating a pioneering image recognition. The second phase of the "development phase" is mainly attributed to the car culture that was popular in the United States in the 1950s. Entrepreneurs were inspired by highway billboards and used signs with corporate

logos, standard fonts, and standard colours to reinforce their corporate image. The third stage, "Systematisation Stage", was in the mid to late 1970s. Systematisation was the major progress in this stage, with the systematisation of the design content, the systematisation of the design subject, and the systematisation of the design process as its specific manifestations. The representative of this stage is the design of Motoo Nakanishi for the Matsuya Department Store in Ginza, Tokyo, Japan. The fourth stage, the "universalisation stage", is the stage in which CIS has become truly global, and has been widely promoted mainly in developing countries. UIS was first conceptualised by the United States in the 1960s and flourished in Japan in the 1970s (Chen, 2016). With a series of reforms in China in the 1990s after the merger of universities and the expansion of enrolment, scholars have tried to introduce UIS as an image building vehicle in order to avoid homogeneous development among colleges and universities. UIS is not a simple transplantation of CIS but a choice made by the university to obtain a UIS is not a simple transplantation of CIS, but a choice made by universities to get better development under the condition of market mechanism. It enhances the strength of universities by fully integrating the tangible and intangible resources of universities, so as to achieve a series of goals of improving the quality of talent cultivation, setting up a brand of universities, establishing the image of universities, expanding the social reputation of universities, and enhancing the social influence of universities. Zhejiang Academy of Fine Arts introduced a set of CIS materials from Japan in 1984, which were used as teaching materials for teaching in the university. This was the first time that CIS was introduced to a Chinese university, but it was only used for teaching, not for practical application (Meiyu, 1999). In the 1990s, Qin Qiwen (1997) provided a more in-depth analysis of the term "corporate". He believes that it can be interpreted not only as a business, but also as an organisation. Thus, the understanding of CIS was extended to the level of "organisational image strategy". This view lays the theoretical foundation for the introduction of CIS in universities as an organisation. Yin Zhiguo and Sha Zhiping (1999) of Jiangsu University of Science and Technology (JUST) first explicitly mentioned university CIS. In the article "Discussing the Image Design of Higher Education Institutions", they believe that "the university should consciously and systematically present the image it wishes to have, endeavour to create the best environment suitable for the survival and development of the university, and comprehensively use various means of communication to transmit the university's mission, campus culture, teaching and research activities, so as to highlight the university's individuality and spirit, and to establish a two-way communication relationship with the public, thus making the public understand the university's image, and to make the public understand the university's image, and to make the public understand the university's image. Communication relationship with the public, so as to create a sense of identity among the public as a strategic activity". Wu Qiufeng and Chen Chunming (2000) believe that "UIS is a comprehensive and systematic design aimed at the school philosophy, behaviour and visual identification related to the image of the university in accordance with the CIS of the corporate image, and through comprehensive and unified communication, it is an image design system that shapes the unique characteristics of university and demonstrates the level of teaching science and technology as well as the image of talents". According to CIS theory, the three major elements constituting UIS are analysed, namely, MI (Mind Identity) for conceptual recognition, BI (Behavior Identity) for behavioural recognition, and VI (Vision Identity) for visual recognition.

UIS was firstly explored from theoretical research to practice in Yunnan University, which firstly explored the UIS system in China in 1997. In the process of designing and shaping the image of Yunnan University, the UIS group of Yunnan University combined theory and practice, and on the basis of CIS design of corporate image recognition system, it constantly summed up the practical experience and published "Shaping the Soul of Yunnan University - Designing and Shaping the Image of Yunnan University", which put forward the prototype of

UIS among Chinese colleges and universities. The prototype of UIS. The book argues that UIS pays more attention to the high degree of unity between university spirit and external image, and that the construction of university image is a process of pursuing, inheriting and promoting university spirit, and that the construction of university image is to better develop the spirit and promote the concept of the university, so as to form a benign circle in which the university spirit and the image of the university are mutually reinforcing and co-developing (Yunnan University UIS Project Group, 2000). The group proposes that universities, as "processing factories" for high-level talents, "incubators" for high-tech and "fountainheads" for new ideas, have a thick and intangible spiritual heritage and an inner mechanism to inspire innovation. It has precipitated a heavy and intangible spiritual heritage and an inner mechanism for inspiring innovation, which is the spirit of the university, and the brand and image of the university are the external manifestation of the spirit of university. Yunnan University's successful shaping of the university's overall image has become a reference and reference object for subsequent image recognition construction of universities, and since then, UIS has been widely used as an important tool and method for universities to move towards the same individuality. On February 14, China's Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, and National Development and Reform Commission announced the "Second Round of the "Double First-Class" Construction Universities and Construction Disciplines List", and through a survey of 147 universities in the list, it was found that, as of December 2022, more than 120 universities had released UIS or visual identity sub-systems within the scope of UIS, such as VI, VIS, VIU, and so on.

### **Emotional Design**

#### 1) Emotional design research process

Emotional design originates from the rise of humanistic thinking in the 1950s, which emphasises the attention to the inner nature and spiritual pursuit of human beings. In the 1960s, the study of emotion had been an important branch of psychology, and the input of emotion into the traditional design process was focused on the physiological, behavioural and cognitive efforts of the user. In the 1980s, the scope of emotion research was gradually expanded to include the fields of information sciences, ergonomics, marketing, and education, and more and more scholars were encouraged to take an inclusive view of the individual by attempting to understand the user's emotional and pleasurable needs. Donald A. Norman and Stephen W. Draper, in their 1986 book *User-Centred System Design: New Perspectives on Human-Computer Interaction*, first proposed that "User-Centred Design" can be regarded as the original concept of Emotional Design. After more than 30 years, a large amount of literature has been accumulated in this field. This study takes the literature related to emotional design included in the Web of Science (WOS) database as the data source, and reviews, analyses and summarises the knowledge structure of the existing literature with the help of scientific bibliometrics. It is found that the research on affective design shows a general upward trend in terms of chronological paper output, draws on a large amount of literature and knowledge from interdisciplinary fields in the process of development, and forms three mainstream theoretical systems, which are: affective design represented by the three-level theory of Prof. Donald A. Norman; emotional design represented by Prof. Rosalind W. Picard of MIT; emotional Computing; and Affective Engineering represented by Professor Mitsuo Nagamachi of Hiroshima University, Japan. As important research methods and paradigms in affective design, three-level theory, affective computing and perceptual engineering play an important role in the emergence and development of affective design research. Through the literature review, we objectively analyse the changes and development of the research hotspots in this field, and show the evolution process of affective design research at the basic knowledge level,

which can bring a more accurate grasp of the question of "how affective design theories and methods affect design activities" in the subsequent design practice.

**Table 1** Comparison of dominant theories of emotional design

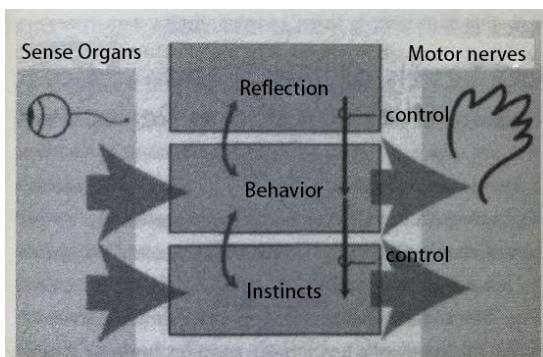
	<b>Three-level theory (TCM)</b>	<b>Emotional calculation</b>	<b>Perceptual engineering</b>
Origins	Psychology of Design, late 1980s	The Society of Mind	1975 Studies in Emotional Engineering
Theoretical foundation	Cognitive Psychology, Design	Computer Science, Artificial Intelligence	Ergonomics, Design
Representative individual (of a school of thought)	Donald A. Norman	Rosalind W. Picard	Mitsuo Nagamachi
Key points	Creative and integrated design of product form, colour, shape, and interaction, centred on the emotional needs of the consumer.	Calculations that are related to, derived from, or capable of influencing emotional factors.	We use engineering to quantify various consumer perceptions, and then find out the relationship between this perceptual quantity and various physical quantities as the basis of engineering research.
Core concepts	Focus on users' inner emotional needs centre	Machine intelligence should include emotional intelligence skills	Emotional quantification and imagery analysis
Research methodology	Top-down overall design concept	High recognition rate recognition algorithms for classifying emotions from physiology	The most accurate consumer demand data and the most matching design solutions from big data analysis.
Bureau	International Society for Design and Mood	for the time being	Sensorimotor Engineering Society

## 2) The Three-Level Theory of Emotional Design

In the 1980s, Norman set up a laboratory at the University of California, San Diego, dedicated to researching the utility and usability of products, exploring the design of product function and shape in a rational and logical way, and telling people why household products should not confuse, irritate, and frustrate people. User-centred design is a core concept in Design Psychology, and the design of everyday household products should also take into account the needs and perceptions of the user, with ease of use and ease of understanding becoming essential elements of safe and usable product design. Norman reflected on his own viewpoints in his 2004 book *Emotional Design*, arguing that he had only focused on the scientific aspect of product design, and that he had only focused on the scientific aspect. He argues that he has focused on cognition at the scientific level and neglected aesthetics and emotion. He points out that cognition gives meaning to things, while emotions give them value. Emotions therefore play a crucial role in everyday decision-making, changing the way we think and guiding us to avoid harm, Norman proposes a three-level theory of instinctive, behavioural and reflective

hierarchies. Through a detailed discussion of the three levels, he explains the importance of emotion in design, emphasises the role of emotional factors in design, and proposes design principles and emotional measurement methods to respond to the needs and experiences of users at different levels.

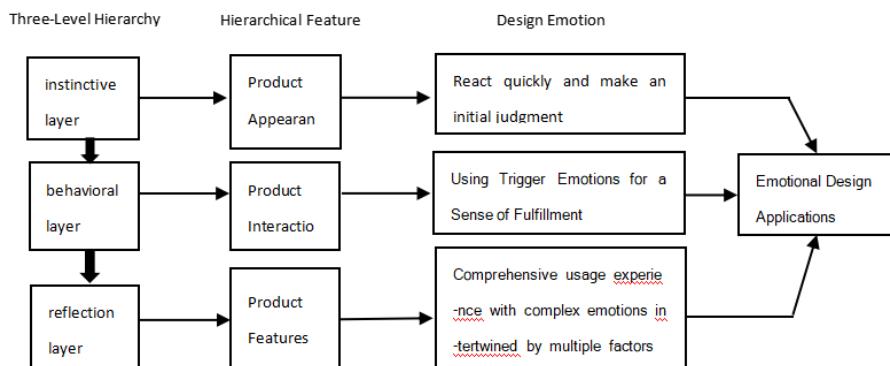
The three levels of human brain activity are the instinctive level, the behavioural level and the reflective level, each of which plays a different role in the overall functioning of the human being. The instinctive level is the innate part that reacts quickly, can make quick judgements about whether it is good or bad, safe or dangerous, and autonomously sends appropriate signals to the muscles and other motor systems to activate the rest of the brain for an immediate response. The instinctual level is the starting point for emotional processing and is determined by biological factors that can inhibit or reinforce them by controlling input information. The behavioural level is the functioning part of the body that controls the body's daily behaviour and is controlled and influenced by the reflective level, which can also influence and control the instinctive level, to which most human behaviour falls. The reflective level is the thinking part of the brain that is not directly linked to sensory input and does not directly control behavioural performance, but it can give the behavioural level a certain bias through monitoring, introspection and so on. As shown in Figure 2, the three levels of the brain interact and regulate each other. When behaviour is initiated at the lowest instinctual level, it is called 'bottom-up' behaviour. When behaviour is initiated at the highest level of reflection, it is called "top-down" behaviour. Bottom-up processes are driven by perception, while top-down processes are driven by thought. Corresponding to the three levels of the brain, there are three different levels of design: the instinctive level of design refers to the design of intuitive elements such as the appearance of the product; the behavioural level of design is related to the pleasure, ease of use and efficiency of the product; the reflective level of design refers to the reasonableness and intelligence of the product, whether or not it can evoke memories, and whether or not it can express the individuality of the product and express the self. The instinctive and behavioural levels of emotional design are felt or seen in the moment, while the reflective level of design lasts longer and establishes a longer-term connection with the product, which is more influenced by cultural, experiential and individual differences. Norman believes that the affective system and the cognitive system are both information-processing systems, but with different functions. The affective system is responsible for making quick and effective judgements about the good, bad and pros and cons in the surrounding environment, while the cognitive system is responsible for interpreting and understanding the world. Cognition and emotion influence each other; emotional and affective states can be driven by cognition, and conversely, emotion often influences cognition.



**Figure 1** Three levels of operation: instinct, behaviour and reflection

Jordan's 2000 book *Designing Pleasurable Products* outlined a new approach to the study of human factors diversity based on the realisation that the quality of the human-product

relationship depends not only on the usability of the product, but is also influenced by the emotional factors of pleasure or displeasure that the product brings. Scholar Peter H. Bloch's (1995) article in the Journal of Marketing, which introduced conceptual models and propositions to describe how the form of a product is linked to the psychological and behavioural responses of consumers, has also attracted a great deal of attention, followed by Pieter Desmet of Delft University of Technology, Paul Hekkert (2007) published in the International Journal of Design, which discusses three different levels of product experience, including aesthetic, meaningful and emotional experiences, and proposes a general framework based on different types of emotional product experiences to explain the personalisation and hierarchical nature of product experiences. The development and change of the three-level theory (Figure 2) reflects the fact that affective design research is not only concerned with visual objects such as form and colour, but also with user behaviour and user experience. Design concepts and objects are also expanding, from tangible physical products to intangible virtual products and interactive processes, and the basic principle of "user-centredness" is emphasised and practised.



**Figure 2** Schematic diagram of the three-level theory

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study mainly adopts qualitative research methods. It is divided into three stages: data collection, data analysis and conclusion.

Step 1: Data analysis is mainly used in the data collection phase. The first step is to gain an in-depth understanding of the sources, developments, cases, and applications of the image recognition system of the target university through extensive data collection, on the basis of identifying the research object. In the next step, the literature analysis of the emotional design theory based on the research is carried out, and the relevant literature is fully read, and the development process of emotional design theory in different periods, the evolution of theoretical schools, the expansion of application fields, and the changes of design methods are deeply analyzed.

Step 2: In the data analysis stage, the case study method is mainly used. Based on the case data collected in the previous stage, this paper analyzes the typical design cases of university image recognition, extracts the regular design principles from the perspective of the working mechanism of arousing attention, exerting functions and touching emotions, and excavates the influencing factors of university image recognition design cases from the perspective of emotion.

Step 3: Conclusion. Combined with the results of qualitative analysis of data and cases, this paper discovers the method of emotional impact on design, and obtains the internal relationship between the university image recognition system and the emotional design theory, which lays a good foundation for subsequent design research.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

### Emotional instinctive layer acting on visual recognition

VI is the university appearance image recognition system, shaping the image of the university through unified, systematic and standardised visual identity design. The instinctive level focuses on the emotional effect that the product brings to the user, and the expression of the emotionality of the design through the visual elements can effectively convey the perceptual information. The substitution of instinctive level in VI design is to transform the visual specification of the basic part of VI and the various elements of the application part into product attributes and play a direct, concrete and vivid role in the visual communication process.

Harvard University will give every person who comes to visit, further education, study a handbag or backpack printed with the school logo (Figure 3), which contains the school's campus brochure, maps, notebooks, file folders, envelopes, pens, and other items that can fully reflect the design of the school's VI system. These items become a carrier of information transfer, highlighting the deep cultural heritage of Harvard University through innovative and well-made cultural and creative products, and bringing sensory impact to the audience in a short period of time.

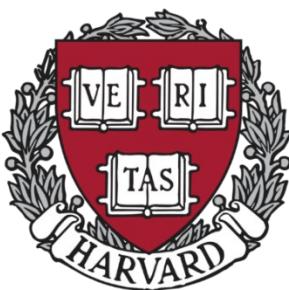
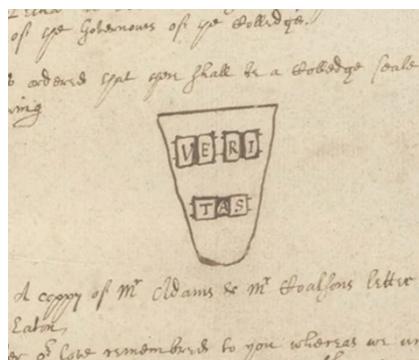


Figure 3 Hand-drawn sketch of 1643 (left) and modern school crest Veritas Shield (right)

From the case of Harvard University, it is found that intuitive visual experience brings the most instinctive emotional impact on the VI audience, i.e., it establishes the connection between each element of VI and the audience at the visual level, and strengthens the audience's understanding of the uniqueness of the university's image.

### Emotional Behavioural Layer Acting on Behavioural Recognition

BI is the most tangible and objective content of the whole college image, which is directly related to the formation of school style. Behavioural level focuses on the emotional connection brought by the product to the user, and the satisfaction of the user's emotional needs is mainly related to the functional experience brought by the product. The influence of the behavioural level on BI is closely related to the functions of the university, and the scope of influence is reflected in the personnel, composition, system and activities associated with the functions, including the ability and expertise of the staff and students, relying on the characteristics of the disciplines, the talent training mode, the style of long-term running of the school, and the school's characteristic activities, and so on.

The annual Oxford and Cambridge University Boat Race has been going on for nearly 200 years, and the clash of Britain's top two universities on the Thames outside the academic sphere has become a cultural event during the Easter holidays in London. The event originated from a Cambridge University war paper in 1829 and has evolved into the special Varsity model of university campus sport, the varsity league model, which is represented by the famous NCAA college basketball league in the United States. These university sports activities in the BI

system can not only attract social sponsorship to bring economic benefits to the university, but more importantly, continue to enhance the influence of the university by attracting audiences.



**Figure 4** Early Oxbridge Rowing Race crews (left) and modern crews (right)

In the case of Oxford and Cambridge Universities, it was found that the use of Hierarchy of Behaviour Theory can generate high efficiency and high yield, bring pleasure and satisfaction to the BI audience, and create a personalised image of the university through the perceived and experienced 'usability' of the university's actions during the interaction process.

#### **Emotionalised Reflection Layer Acting on Idea Recognition**

MI reflects the most essential characteristics of the university, usually reflecting the overall strategic positioning of the university, and is the core and essence of the entire UIS system. The reflective level focuses on the emotional experience that the product brings to the user. Since the audiences of university image have different ideological, cultural and professional backgrounds, MI design firstly needs to clearly express the university's education policy, education concept and education ideology in the form of school motto, spirit and school spirit, and then give MI a profound connotation through the design of reflection level to bring more thoughts and experiences for the audiences, and finally form emotional resonance to MI.

Tsinghua University was founded in 1911. For more than 100 years, Tsinghua teachers and students have adopted the motto of "Self-improvement and Virtue". The motto was first proposed by Mr Liang Qichao, a famous modern thinker in China, when he gave a speech at Tsinghua University in 1914, in which he inspired the students of Tsinghua with the words of the traditional Chinese culture "Zhouyi": "As the sky moves, so does a man's self-improvement; and as the earth moves, so does a man's virtue". Since then, the school's motto has been defined by the use of the eight characters "Self-improvement, Virtue and Carrying Things" in the school's emblems at all stages of its development (Figure 5). Although the school motto was not mentioned again for a period of time after the founding of New China, in the 1990s, in order to better inherit the fine tradition of Tsinghua, the school motto was widely used in Tsinghua University's ceremonies, rituals, and activities, which was enthusiastically responded to by teachers and students, and it gradually became the common spiritual pursuit of Tsinghua's teachers and students and became more widely known throughout China, and the Tsinghua school motto was regarded by society as highlighting the Chinese national soul. The Motto of Tsinghua University is regarded by the public as manifesting the national soul of the Chinese nation.

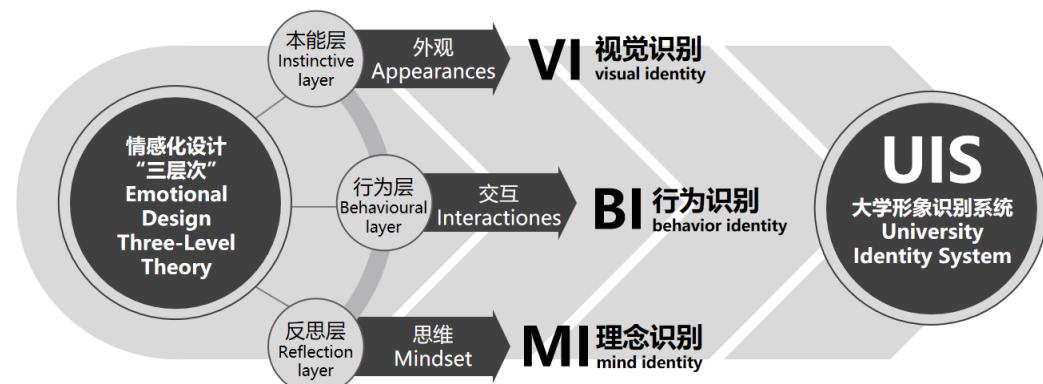


**Figure 5** Style of Tsinghua University emblem in different periods

From the case of Tsinghua University, it can be found that the continuous emotional projection of the reflective hierarchy can make the audience have a deeper thinking reaction after experiencing and understanding MI, and this design and communication process is the practice of the MI concept, and the design of reflective hierarchy helps MI to gradually shape the image of the university with a kernel and distinctive features.

## DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

By sorting out and summarizing the development of university image recognition system and emotional design theory, and systematically reviewing the relevant research related to multiple disciplines, a comprehensive understanding of research theories from macro to micro is formed. On the basis of full understanding, the intrinsic relationship between university image recognition and emotional design was excavated, and the three levels of emotional design had an impact on the construction of audience emotion from three aspects: appearance, interaction and thinking, and this process corresponded to the three subsystems of UIS, showing the association of "visual arousal-behavior association-concept identity", as shown in the figure.



**Figure 6** Schematic diagram of the relationship between university image identity and affective design

It is found that the composition of the university image recognition system can present different emotional representations, and the emotional design theory has a rational basis for cross-field application, which has a guiding role in the design of university image identity based on visual presentation. The next step is to conduct empirical research through actual cases. This paper introduces a general strategy for visual image design projects, expands the application boundaries of emotional design theory in the field of product design, and carries out emotional design and application for university visual design projects. In context of visual communication design, qualitative and quantitative research methods are comprehensively used to try to present university culture in the form of visual image, improve the visual representation of the

homogeneity of university image at this stage, and put forward general strategies and guidelines for emotional design of university image.

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