Redesigning of Japanese Movie Posters: With the Perspective of Japanese

Aesthetics and Cultures

Submitted by

Jill Chou

1100200059

Submitted to

Dr. Aiden Yeh

Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages
May 20, 2015

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between Japanese redesigning film posters and Japanese cultures, including the reasons that make Japanese repackage movie posters, and comparison to the film posters of original versions. For audience, movie posters may be just one of the advertising methods to promote a movie. For movie companies, movie posters should attract audience and arouse their curiosity or interest to go to movies. However, movie posters can also be regarded as an insight toward a culture in life. Movie posters are not designed in only one version for global audience. Film posters are redesigned according to the local cultures, thoughts, and aesthetics. Japan is one of the most typical and famous countries which usually redesign posters of foreign movies. In Japan, Japanese have specific aesthetics and popular cultures shown on their movie posters, which are quite a different style and layout to propagandize movies, but Japanese movie posters are seldom connected to their cultures while audience enjoy the posters. By analyzing and comparing Japanese redesigning movie posters to original posters, it was be discovered that Japanese cultures and aesthetics have really influenced Japanese's ideas and design on film posters considerably.

Introduction

Nowadays, movies have been considered to be a necessary entertainment in our life. People went to movies for fun in their leisure time despite of a global economical depression in 2008. According to the statistic in 2014 from TVBS news, global film profits were going to exceed one trillion dollars in that year (Zhang). Movies are truly a great industry around the world. In addition, movies are cultural artifacts reflecting cultures on stories, filmmaking techniques, and ways of propaganda. Film companies must have effective ideas to catch people's eye and attract them to see movies. Due to the widespread use of technology like smartphones and televisions, most people know a movie by watching trailers through media, and then decide whether or not they go to theater to see a movie. However, besides the trailers displayed on media, posters have been one of the mainstreams to advertise movies. As Gary D. Rhodes indicates, "Poster designs have become indelibly linked with the movies they advertise, often to the degree that their images act as embodiments of their films for collective memory" (228). That means not only trailers, but also movie posters have posed importance to movies, especially in Japan.

For Japanese, posters are a method to show their nationality and creativity, which are necessary in Japanese education. Japanese prefer to choose posters they design rather than easily accept posters from foreign countries. E. Zhu also affirms that posters have not been the primary medium to advertise anymore in modern times, but it is an exception in Japan where an increasingly number of posters is produced every year. That means posters are still essential for Japanese people.

In fact, different from other countries using technology to broadcast products, Japanese people place a high value on poster graphic design. Jing Su has a depiction on the organization which had affected the status of Japanese graphic design; since

161

1951, Japan Advertising Artists Club, which collected works of outstanding designers in public to cultivate talents of design after World War II, had held an art exhibition every year, but the organization was compelled to be dissolved in 1970. During the twenty years, Japan Advertising Artists Club gradually led the design activity and inaugurated a Golden Age of graphic design in Japan (10). Japanese posters are a powerful publicity without sound, so posters, especially movie posters, are a significant tool to propagandize products for Japanese. Posters are extremely helpful for movie advertisements because movie posters are also a portion of filmmaking art. Besides, more details about the significance of movie posters are explained by Hideaki Fujiki, "Movies have never been separated from their advertising since cinematic devices were first imported into Japan in the late nineteenth century. Japanese people experience an environment where it would be hard to avoid posters in periodicals" (67).

Movie posters have been everywhere in Japanese people's daily life. Japanese people seldom use original posters, but like to redesign movie posters from other countries, such as America, China, and so on. Xiao-Xia Bao claims that in the past 30 years, because of the considerable gains at box office in Japan, Japanese designers are admitted by Hollywood to redesign posters with Japanese aesthetics, which can appeal to more Japanese to see movies. The dramatic profit in the Japanese box office makes Hollywood allow Japanese to change movie posters, as well as Japanese high self-awareness which glorifies their own cultures and the aesthetics in Japan. Against western countries, Japanese people have their specific aesthetics and cultures. Japanese people appreciate simple and detailed styles. At the same time, they also worship "kawaii (可愛い)," which means the culture with cute creations, and other popular cultures like manga (漫画). Thanks to the huge gains in box office, Japanese

have chances to redesign movie posters according to Japanese styles which are more acceptable for Japanese audience.

Based on the scenario that Japanese love and are allowed to re-make movie posters, why do Japanese people want to change the design of original movie posters? How do they redesign movie posters? What affects their re-making of posters? These are questions waiting for answers. Therefore, this paper intends to investigate movie posters of Japanese version to know Japanese special aesthetics, how they redesign movie posters, and observation with my Japanese movie posters collection. This paper proposes to compare Japanese movie posters to movie posters of original versions. A majority of researches about posters focus on the western posters, and most non-western countries use the original posters from Western, which cannot show the relevance to local cultures and ideas. Yet, Japanese are not only used to making a change of movie posters but create a totally new style on movie posters. From the redesigning of Japanese movie posters, Japanese special culture and aesthetics are revealed obviously. These phenomenons about movie posters in Japan will be investigated. Comparing to Japanese movie posters, this paper is going to examine the differences in the process and manner of designing between Japanese movie posters and original movie posters which are mostly from western countries.

This paper can be divided into five sections. First, the motivation and some questions related to Japanese movie posters are briefly introduced. The second section is about Japanese specific aesthetics and popular cultures. Next, the classification and the analysis of Japanese movie posters are shown. The fourth section would emphasize the changes that Japanese posters make, including Japanese movie posters compared to the original movie posters. The final part is to summarize findings and conclusions drawn from this study.

Insight from Posters into Japanese Aesthetics and Cultures

This section aims to give a broad review of movie posters, the history of

Japanese posters, the importance of movie posters for Japanese, and the popular

cultures and the aesthetics of Japan to design.

It had been less than 20 years when Japanese graphic design leapt to fame all

over the world. Nevertheless, about the Japanese posters, few researches were in

Chinese or English in the past. Only until the modern times, the academia has begun

to appreciate researches of Japanese design more and more. Before knowing the

graphic history of Japan, the western movie propaganda history must be referred at

first.

About movie history, Hong Lee suggests that it has been over one hundred

years since cinema was created. [1]Month cards, [2]paintings, [3]posters which are ways

to propagandize movies can all be referred to as movie posters. Movie posters are

usually posted in theaters, on billboards, or other public places (5). However, posters

are not movies; besides making movie posters to show the synopsis of movies, most

movie poster makers do not attempt to design glaring posters. Therefore, Eladio

Rivadulla, Jr. demonstrates that film producers and directors never hoped or wished

for promotional posters to be such works of art in their own right that their

fundamental goal of attracting the attention and interest of the public would be

detracted (36). In other words, film posters should be clear for audience, and cannot

confuse what a movie shows and directly attract people to help film companies

propagandize products, movies, in public. Although posters may not steal the show of

---

[1] Month cards, created in the late Qing Dynasty in Shanghai, are a kind of propaganda paintings.
Month cards are originated from Chinese Solar Calendar, and were initially used as a method to
promote products.
[2] Movie paintings which are a tradition way to advertise movies in theater are painted by hand.
[3] Posters are presswork on paper, and posters can be spread faster than month cards and paintings.

movies, a vast majority of movie posters design truly presents specific concept of local aesthetics, and so do Japanese movie posters.

The history of Japanese poster design is not longer than the western countries, but it is true that Japanese design has the most significant effect and status in Asia. As Rachael Steven mentions, "the role of poster in Japanese visual culture has changed significantly since the Second World War." In the 1950s and 60s, the Japan Advertising Annual Club, the first organization for Japanese graphic designers, held exhibitions of painted designs every year, which won international awards and caught the attention worldwide. Then, rapid economic development in the 1960s facilitated new printing techniques, and both the quality and quantity to produce posters accelerated. In the decade that followed, designers also preferred to create limited editions works for artists, musicians and cultural venues and reinterpret the poster as an initiative artwork rather than an implement for advertising. Consumerists who prospered in the 1980s disclosed new wave of designs, where fashion brands, photographers and artists collaborated on tentative artwork and designers employed "allusive image-based pseudo-narratives" in their posters. In addition, Richard S. Thornton has a further description on Japanese corporations which became more dependent on posters to promote an image. Due to leadership from independent art directors and successful designers, [4]commercial posters had individual expression which was more experimental and indicative. By the 1970s, Japanese poster design was dominant in the international design community (14).

Besides the Japanese poster design history developed in Japan, Japanese posters have considerable impact on Japanese. That is to say, these posters can be said as a

---

[4] For example, tobacco commercial poster symbolized the authority with the tobacco for men, especially soldiers, during First Sino-Japanese War.
A Japanese commercial poster used Japanese special culture, Sumo wrestlers, to represent the large size of Saki.

motivation for Japanese to see movies in the early twentieth century. Hideaki Fujiki claims that in the early twentieth century, movie posters had already spread through Japanese daily life unprecedentedly. It is impossible for Japanese people to live a life without posters. Different kinds of film posters appear in print and change weekly. Fujiki notes that unlike ads for products like housewares, commodities which are less variable and less changeable over time, movie ads provide a visual environment where people usually confront different, rapidly replaced images, such as posters and commercials on television (95). Movie posters in both Japan and western countries create an environment for consumers to get impression on a movie immediately like movie information from the image. Movie posters also play a significant role to present the socio-cultural meanings and the recent form of visual environment in Japan. Most specially, movie posters all over the world are a method to encourage people to think of neither the posters themselves nor the movies they are broadcasting, but to evoke people's curiosity about the products: movies. As a result, movie posters are the main reason and the element not only to attract people but also to raise consumers' culture.

Since the 1990s, the cultures of Japan have promptly spread worldwide, especially the popular cultures, such as manga and the quality of cuteness. Douglas Mcgray supports that the impact of Japan is rising again. Japan was not defeated by the economical hardship after World War II; on the contrary, its position in the international popular cultures has increased. By means of popular cultures, Japan established a mighty propaganda to show its nationality to the whole world. In Japan, popular cultures are essential for Japanese's life. "When asked how they spent their leisure time, 80 percent of men and women in 1986 said they averaged about two and one-half hours per weekday watching television, listening to the radio, and reading

Japanese newspapers or magazines" (Wikipedia). Besides, Japanese young people are affected by two main popular cultures now: Manga and Kawaii.

Manga (漫画) is a Japanese word, which means comics. Manga is also a type of Japanese art mixed with cultures, and it has a long and complicated pre-history in earlier Japan. Japanese people at all ages read mangas, including broad genres: romance, sports and games, comedy, science fiction and fantasy, and so on. Now, mangas are translated into extensive languages, which attract more readers all over the world. Via the survey of Marubeni Institute of Economics, the export of Japanese comics from 1992 to 2002 is found drastically accelerating three hundred percent while other industries increase only fifteen percent (Yang). The impact of manga should not be underestimated. What's more, manga is not just an amusement. It can be regarded as a way of propaganda as well. "Manga has facilitated humans' communicate and connect in modern society" (Berndt). Manga creates a brand-new platform to help people narrate their emotions, feelings, or ideas. Sometimes, the comics creators address an issue about the society by drawing manga to make readers reflect. Related to manga, kawaii (可愛い) is also a popular word recently. It is a phenomenon which widely exists in Japan. Brian Bremner proposes, "The everyday visual landscape of Tokyo— the ad banners on the subway, storefronts signs, and various forms of mass media like manga and fashion magazines— are just oozing with cute stuff." The sociological facts of kawaii swept the whole Japan. Japanese' ideology and culture are quietly changed. In sum, Manga is important in Japanese people's life, and impress them on every aspect like ideas, too. It truly brings a huge transformation and shock to Japanese traditional cultures.

For another, Japan contains specific aesthetics which are markedly different from other countries. Donald Keene offers an attitude toward Japanese specific

aesthetics and what Japanese aesthetics include:

> Japanese aesthetics can be approached not only through the relatively scant
> writings of the old literature specifically devoted to the subject, but through
> the evidence in works of literature or criticism, in objects of art, and even in
> the manner of life of the Japanese as a whole, so pervasive has aestheticism
> been. (294)

Keene especially points out suggestion, irregularity, simplicity, and perish ability as key words in understanding Japanese aesthetics while exaggeration, uniformity, profusion, and durability are rare in Japanese aesthetics.

To be brief, the Japanese aesthetic of the beauty of simplicity and harmony is called Wabi-sabi (侘寂), which is on behalf of a comprehensive Japanese world view or aesthetic system. Wabi-sabi is a beauty of imperfection, impermanence, and incompletion. "It is the beauty of things modest and humble. It is the beauty of things unconventional" (Koren 46-54). The concepts of Wabi-sabi are associated with the concepts of Zen Buddhism. For Japanese people in the past, Buddhism had been a worldwide culture and religion. At that time, Japanese were affected by one faction in Buddhism, Zen. In the view of Wabi-sabi, Japanese uphold odd but negate even number, which is exactly the essence of Zen. Wabi-sabi has been placed on a dominant high aesthetic in Japan. When Japanese design posters, they always follow the one and only aesthetic, which has great impact on their ideas and lives.

Different from the Western aesthetic framework of beauty, sublimity, and disinterest, Mara Miller finds Japanese aesthetics, Wabi-sabi, to a whole new set of basic concepts: "the ways in which arts and aesthetics are integrated with daily life, the emphasis on process rather than product, the different views of originality and obsolescence, the length of time involved in creativity, and the relation of the artistic

process to the self" (Miller). That is, Wabi-sabi influences Japanese' mind and life with the idea of transience and imperfection. Wabi-sabi is employed in each area in Japan. For example, Japanese food, sushi, is a symbol of simplicity. Sushi is made only using a small piece of raw fish and a handful of rice. In addition, Wasbi-sabi can also be found in works of one of the most famous Japanese architects, Todao Ando. Todao Ando used a natural skill, "Architectural concrete," to build a house. This sort of skills can keep the original feature of concrete at the end. It is extremely simplistic, but still helps Japanese focus on the basic thought of the arrangement between light and space in architecture.

With the researches about the purposes of movie posters, the history of Japanese posters, the importance of movie posters for Japanese, the popular cultures and aesthetics of Japan to design, it is not a surprise that Japanese add their popular cultures and aesthetics to posters. In addition to the study of Hong Lee, a nationality in art style may be addressed on methods of designing posters. Eladio Rivadulla, Jr. also refers the purpose of film posters to help people clarify the content or style of a movie and to help film companies propagandize movies. Rachael Steven has more details about the history of Japanese poster design, and then the importance of Japanese posters is reviewed by Hideaki Fujiki, which makes how Japanese poster design developed to be as a portion of humans' life more clear. Furthermore, the studies on Japanese unique popular cultures and aesthetics differ from other cultures and art form in western countries. Thanks to these studies, Japanese design has gradually been viewed as a theme to research on Japanese modern and pragmatic art form.

The Features of Japanese Movie Posters

In order to give insights into the forms, skills, and ideas of Japanese movie

posters to design, this section is to classify and analyze the characteristics of Japanese movie posters. According to the observation of Japanese movie posters, the features of the posters can be categorized into three points: the style, the hint as well as the atmosphere revealed on posters in accordance with specific genres of movies, and the layout on movie posters.

I. The Style Which Japanese Made on Film Posters

Movie posters are also a kind of art, but they are used more like an advertising material, which are primarily affected by the local culture and manner of life. Jun-Jie Lin illuminates that posters can reflect the social culture of a place where they are made (367). That means each country has its own culture. According to the different cultures, the theme and the designing skill of posters will be quite various as well. Then, the designers would show the specific style from their own country on posters, and this phenomenon causes impact on movie poster design, too. In this subsection, the styles which Japanese made on movie posters and the reasons to design in such styles are going to be analyzed.

For movie posters, style is a strong expression of designers' ideas and cultures which have bred designers. Style of a movie poster not only expresses the highly complete visual enjoyment, but also makes a deep impression on audience. The style of a movie poster may be made based on a designer's concept, motivation, and so on. Among Japanese movie posters, the styles can be categorized into two factors; one is manga with a great popularity in Japan, and the other is Japanese special aesthetic, Wabi-sabi, which has a long history of affecting Japanese's life.

As the aforesaid, manga has played an important role in Japanese popular cultures since the late 19th century. It is during the Allied occupation of Japan at the end of World War II, the development of Japanese really began, and was largely

influenced by American culture. For designers making movie posters, they can change the original western movie posters with some of their own culture, but combine Japanese manga style on posters.

As for the vision, manga style leaves a more specific impression on audience. It can reserve a sheer visual form to express everything. For example, different from other types of posters, movie posters with manga style can be added with texts, conversation, or onomatopoeia to symbolize sound on pictures. In this way, designers are able to combine interesting pictures with texts to propagandize movies on movie posters. Furthermore, Japanese manga is basically composed of boxes, dramatic personae, background, word balloon, onomatopoeia, comic symbol, dialogue and other skills. Those skills help manga become the most powerful media to deliver information and ideas to readers, and are also utilized in movie poster designing.

On the basis of the research of Shan-Chieh Chu, the skills of manga can be divided into four points (58-67):

1. Symbol: Comic symbol can embody characters' psychology and action. For instance, sweat drawn around a character's head means "Plewds (Work hard and feel overwhelmed)," and sometimes means "Emanta (Shock and terrify)." A light bulb above head is "Great Idea (Flash of Genius)," and so on. These comic symbols can make comics have more effects of interpretation.

2. Background: In the comics, background can be classified into realistic and imaginative scenario which can be drawn with unrestrained thoughts. Plus, background can construct the atmosphere of the story and reveal characters' mind.

3. Text: For comics, texts are originally an annotation on pictures, but now, texts can also be the sound and special effect of comic books, especially onomatopoeic and mimetic words. Take onomatopoeic words for example. Onomatopoeic words are usually in the form of handwriting fonts. Some special fonts can represent the emotion of voice and a character.

4. Dialog box: It is common that the content of characters' talk and thoughts is written in word balloons. Different methods of word balloons can indicate different speaking tones and meaning, which increases narrativity and interest.

These four elements above are the most essential in comics, and are often used to redesign movie posters.

Besides manga style, the specific aesthetic of Japan, Wabi-sabi, also places a high value in Japan. The notion of Wabi-sabi can be found everywhere in Japanese' life. Because of Wabi-sabi, most Japanese like simple colors or decorations. Although on Japanese movie posters, Wabi-sabi is utilized less than manga style, it is still significant to redesign movie posters, especially the hue and Japanese traditional color. In order to convey information to readers' mind, the color matching with Wabi-sabi must be appropriate to the meaning of what a designer wants to express. Actually, color, including hue, is a language. If a movie is about happiness, humor, satire, the movie poster will be designed with high chroma. The high chroma gives people a more exciting and wonderful feeling. Furthermore, dark colors like black symbolize silence and steady. They will be used on horrible or solemn movies, such as documentary. Thus, two redesign Japanese movie posters will be as samples to be analyzed with manga and Wabi-sabi styles.

First, the Japanese movie poster of the movie, "*God bless America*" (Figure 1),

is combined with Japanese comic styles. For example, on the poster of "*God bless America*," comic symbols are widely used to reveal the action of the two characters, and exaggerate the satire of American society. In the story of the movie, the two characters tried to change the American society after seeing selfish, stupid, arrogant people on TV or in their life. They took guns to combat evil social trends and foster a spirit of uprightness across the America. In order to make the characters' action more vivid, designers drew bullets and stars around the characters. It seems that audience can feel the characters are shooting and fighting others with their guns on the poster. Besides, the bubble signs behind the girl and the man can make them look more powerful. The expository texts are also in a Japanese comic dialog box, which symbolizes the disgruntled roar of the man to the whole society. However, this movie satirizes the modern American society with two unprofessional but passionate killers, so the background is used crimson lake color that means the "burn" of the two people's strong idealities as fire. In Japanese manga, if a drawer wants to show his or her work with righteous ardor, red-colored items is always the best choice because it gives a feeling of enthusiasm and sparkling brilliancy. This color and the comic style on the poster express audience the characters' passion to change the society just with their unreasonable and imaginative ideas which are usually drawn on Japanese comic books as well. Second, "*Scream 3*" (Figure 2) is a representative of the style, Wabi-sabi. "*Scream 3*" is a horrible movie, so in Japanese movie poster, the characters are removed, and only the number, "three," is left on the whole black background. The whole frame is so simple that it makes audience with silence, but an eye in the number and the black leads to sense of tension, stress, and scare. Throughout the redesign of the poster, it exactly expresses the terror from the story of "*Scream 3*" to audience.

Figure 1. *God Bless America*   Figure 2. *Scream 3*

Data source: http://eigatirashi.com/

II.   The Hint and the Atmosphere on Japanese Film Posters

In this section, the hint of plot and the atmosphere of a movie on Japanese film posters will be discussed.

The reason why Japanese redesign by leaking a little of the plot on posters is that Japanese have preferred to the design which is detailed and exquisite. Movie posters should be related to the theme of a movie, and should illustrate the story to audience with limited pictures. A feature with meticulosity can always intoxicate Japanese people, and impress them to watch movies.

By means of adding prominent details like the color and action of characters, the plot of a movie can skillfully blend in the movie posters. On Japanese movie posters, color is momentous because it can reveal the whole atmosphere of the plot. Japanese movie posters are usually repackaged with the color based on the plot. Hsien-Hui Lee elucidates due to the infinite variation, color and hue are the element of artists to convey abundant emotions frequently. Visually, humans would have a strong emotional reaction after seeing colors. This reaction is indirect but intense for humans to connect colors with different experiences and sentiment. For instance, black makes people lonely, sad, and sometimes terrified. On the contrary, white gives a feeling of purity, silence, and peace. Through Japanese aesthetic, Wabi-sabi, it

174

seems that Japanese venerate white color, regard it as their main spirit of their nation, and are widely affected by the meaning of white in life, too. Color is crucial for Japanese since it can imply their emotions in an indirect way how Japanese people are used to interact with others. On the other hand, the action of characters on movie posters is also redesigned to accord with the real figure of characters in a movie. Among movie posters, graphic design can be divided into concretization and abstraction. Japanese movie posters constantly redesign characters for concretization to highlight the personality of characters. The movie posters will point out the most prominent and representative action of the main characters. This reality with detailed design, especially design with both creativity and realism, can arouse Japanese's interest and desire for movies. As in the following, two clear examples are displayed to show the hint of plot and the atmosphere on Japanese film posters.

"*Persepolis*" (Figure 3) and "*Ted*" (Figure 4) are movies which can be discovered the atmosphere and the hint of plot on Japanese redesign posters. "*Persepolis*" is a movie about an Iranian girl's confession to her country, emotion, and her grandmother. Nevertheless, the girl was sent abroad since Iran–Iraq War happened. In this movie, the protagonist memorized the jasmine fragrance from her grandmother's bra all the time. The fragrance of jasmine is connected to the protagonist's memory, and is an importance in the whole movie. Therefore, combined with fragrance of flowers and the heart of a young girl, the movie poster is repackaged for pink and filled with images of flowers as a theme to advertise in Japan. When people see pink on the poster, it just seems that the fragrance of jasmine can be smelled from the film poster. Next, teddy bears are always seen as a kind of cute and appealing toys, but the protagonist in "*Ted*" is a very different and rude teddy bear. This movie is actually for adults instead of children, so on Japanese movie posters,

Ted, the teddy bear, is designed to show his real figures: alcoholic, vulgar, and robust like a middle-aged man. His terrible figures are also a selling point in this movie for Japanese. When Japanese see the movie poster, they may be surprised and curiously consider why a lovely teddy bear would have such an indecent action and habit, and then be attracted to see the movie. For Japanese, the hint of plot and the atmosphere on movie posters are a method of business.

Figure 3. *Persepolis*   Figure 4. *Ted*

Data source: http://eigatirashi.com/

III. The Layout Shown on Japanese Film Posters

This section will list the necessary information and design of layout on Japanese redesigning movie posters.

As a medium to deliver a message to audience, Japanese designers use graphic signs or simple texts to show the most essential information of a movie which incorporate cast, plot, honors and awards. The advertising words can catch Japanese's eye in a short time. The slogan on movie posters can explain the story and make audience remember the movies easily. Furthermore, another reason Japanese place honors and awards on redesigning posters is their marketing strategies. Japanese believe in the quality of title like "the No. 1 spot at the North American box office" on movie posters. Sometimes, Japanese film companies release foreign movies much later than other countries to wait for the honor or award of a movie which can be a

publicity stunt to attract more audience. During the time, Japanese companies reproduce a foreign film dubbed into Japanese because Japanese people are used to listening to Japanese rather than watching Japanese subtitles. Japanese film companies truly spend time on movie advertising more than other nations.

Japanese movie posters are abundant in colors and layout. The design critic, J.V. Earle, thinks that Japanese design can be classified into two types. The first one is abundant in color, decorated, magnificent, and creative; the other are pure, simple, and sober (Wu 71). This indicates that Japanese design of film posters have two different and controversial aspects. While keeping Japanese traditional aesthetics, Japanese people also imitate foreign cultures. It helps Japanese learn a new and effective way to design posters, which surpasses the common and monotonous layout on movie posters in the past. With abundant color and characters on movie posters, Japanese will be impacted by film posters immediately, and leave a deep impression. What's more, the characters on posters can clarify the story of a movie for audience at first.

Take two Japanese movie posters for instance. One is "*Hunger Games*" (Figure 5) and the other is "*Despicable Me 2*" (Figure 6). The Japanese slogan—"one twenty-fourth of a chance to survive" is obviously seen on the top of the poster. The advertising words are written in the middle of the poster. Both of the slogan and advertising texts are redesigned on the most conspicuous position. When audience sees the movie poster, they must be appealed by the words at first sight, and they will know this movie is about a cruel contest for saving self-live. On the poster of "*Despicable Me 2*," not only the protagonists but also enemies are displayed. Most importantly, the most famous supporting character around the world, Minions, is a key to attract audience to see the movie. The layout full of characters on the movie

poster enables Japanese audience to feel happy and have fun to expect the plot of the movie. It seems that the voice of minions is in audience's ear, and those cute minions can be taken as the best selling point of this movie.

Figure 5. *Hunger Games*   Figure 6. *Despicable Me 2*

Data source: http://eigatirashi.com/

The rich layout and obvious text information are a strategy of film companies to make more profits in Japan. The slogan of movies is quite specific that it seldom appears on movie posters of original versions, but for Japanese, it is a compendious and direct illustration of a movie depended on whether Japanese decide to go to movies or not.

By repackaging the style, the hint as well as the atmosphere, and the layout on movie posters, Japanese increase the interest and profession of movie poster design. The features of Japanese redesigning movie posters contribute to another special aspect in film poster design. In Japan, besides the development of art value, the propaganda and business of foreign movies are raised. A majority of Japanese watch movies in theaters after seeing the elegant or appealing movie posters. The repackaging of film posters for Japanese market is helpful for the companies to persuade Japanese to buy a ticket and enjoy a movie in theater.

The Differences of Japanese Movie Posters from the Original Version

In this chapter, the features of western movie posters will be mentioned, and the

difference as well as the changes between Japanese and western movie posters will be compared.

To advertise movies to the whole world, western movie posters, especially Hollywood, must be memorable, so western movie posters are discovered to have three features which differ from Japanese redesign movie posters: simple layout, small but few texts, and mysterious. They also have typical models to design according to genres of movies. On most of western movie posters, the layout is simple, concise, and simplex in colors or characters. The graphic elements are usually the protagonist or sign of movies, and sometimes, any characters will not show on movie posters. About texts on western movie posters, it is vastly different from the design of Japanese. Advertising texts and slogans are not designed on western movie posters. Instead, film posters only include the most basic information about title, released date, director, company, actors, and so on. The texts are also small but delicate. Finally, the design of western film posters is not easy for audience to understand the plot of movies directly. Western designers like to leave a great deal to the imagination for audience without numerous images about movies. With iconic images on posters, movie viewers can inspirationally think of the imagery related to the movies.

Based on the discovery of western movie posters, four formulas are used to create successful movie advertising campaigns—attention, interest, desire, and action (Carpenter). If designers want movie posters to arouse those four formulas of audience in West, they must make posters direct to the point and clear. Western people are used to thinking directly and analytically. Their cultures are efficient and egocentric, which makes them communicate without preamble. This is the best, resultful and timesaving relationship. As a result, the simplest film posters are, the powerful visuals they have. Simple design points out the emphasis of a movie. When

designers place the pictorial emphasis like a protagonist on movie posters, it is because western people pay attention to individualism emphasizing on the contribution and value to a movie. In sum, it is found that western film posters are also packaged by revealing western ideas, cultures, and habits to succeed in marketing.

In each genre, movie posters are designed differently. For example, action movies prefer black and white background, and one person running is drawn on posters. Horror movie posters are designed with a big eye in the middle. Face of a protagonist at the center is the most classic layout on western film posters. Usually, a couple would stand back to back on romantic movie posters. The most well-known example of romantic movie posters is "*Pretty Woman*." Contrarily, Japanese movie posters have no such visible models or category on film poster design. In the following, the western movie posters are going to be contradistinguished to the repackaging of Japanese movie posters, and the differences as well as changes will be addressed.

Among adventure movies, both the original posters of "*Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters*" (Figure 7) and "*The Amazing Spider-Man 2*" (Figure 8) focus on the protagonists. The elements on the layouts are fewer than the Japanese versions. On the original film poster of "*Percy Jackson,*" Percy Jackson, the protagonist, hold a sword with the sign of trident on it, and the background is just a forest. The color on the whole poster is dark to reveal the coming of a war. Unlike most western people who have learned the mythology, Japanese movie poster made a change on the layout and images, which leaks the plot of the movie. On Japanese poster, Percy Jackson takes a trident that is a symbol of God of the Sea, Poseidon. That can show audience that he must have power like the God. Around Percy, a Greek god, temple, lightening,

and sea are designed to show how fierce the war is. On Japanese poster of "*The Amazing Spider-Man 2*," it is changed into the view of Spider-Man to compete with his two enemies revealing their abilities in this movie. The symbol of Spider-Man is also the emphasis, but on original poster, it pays attention to the protagonist himself who is on the wall of a high tower and has a crazy personality by designing an upside down view of Spider-Man.

Figure 7. *Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters*	Figure 8. *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*

Data source:

Original version:
http://www.imdb.com/gallery/rg1528338944?refine=poster&ref_=rgmi_ref_pos
Japanese version: http://eigatirashi.com/

Most of western drama movie posters seem serious. The protagonists in "*King's Speech*" (Figure 9) and "*Nebraska*" (Figure 10) show their profile faces which represent a great person on western film posters. About the background of "*King's Speech*," it is red which symbolizes British royalty. However, Japanese version is yellow which has been the color of royal in East. The font on Japanese poster is bold with power of a king. Besides, the crown on the top of the character and a microphone in front of him is direct to echo the topic—King's speech. For another, "*Nebraska*" is entirely repackaged for Japanese audience. The original version of "*Nebraska*" is simple with black and white. Conversely, Japanese poster is in an adorable and cozy Japanese comic style, which puts emphasis on the relationship between a father and

son. The car, the sky, and the cap are related to the plot of this movie. The advertising

texts and honors are numerously written above the title to prove the quality of this
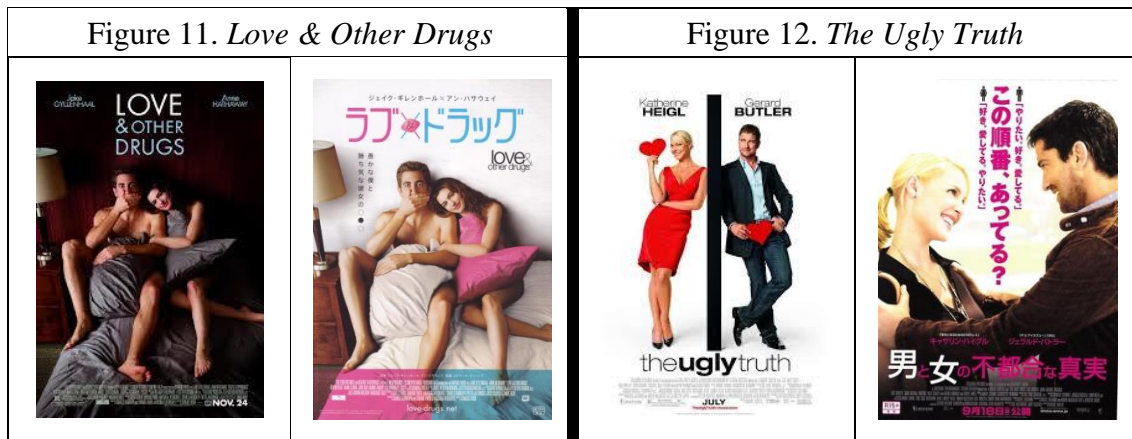
movie for Japanese audience.

Figure 9. *King's Speech*	Figure 10. *Nebraska*

Data source:

Original version:

http://www.imdb.com/gallery/rg1528338944?refine=poster&ref_=rgmi_ref_pos

Japanese version: http://eigatirashi.com/

Romantic movie posters have a typical model to follow in western countries.

There must be a couple on the posters, such as "*Love & Other Drugs*" (Figure 11) and

"*The Ugly Truth*" (Figure 12). The background on western poster of "*Love & Other*

Drugs" is dark to stress the couple's relationship on bed. The Japanese background is

turned into white and simple as a Japanese-style room with Wabi-sabi. The color is

redesigned to expose the sweet atmosphere full of love. This usage of color is often

made on Japanese romantic movie posters: blue for men, pink for women. Instead of

the original poster following the traditional model, Japanese poster of "*The Ugly*

Truth" points out the end of the story by designing the couple smiling to each other,

but, the slogan on Japanese poster reveals the conflicting views to love. The woman

thinks having feelings to someone is the first, and then love him. Finally, she would

like to have a sex with him. On the contrary, the man has a reversed opinion against

the woman. By writing this slogan on poster, it may be a creative advertising

campaign to make audience resonate to a different love viewpoint.

Figure 11. *Love & Other Drugs*	Figure 12. *The Ugly Truth*

Data source:

Original version:

http://www.imdb.com/gallery/rg1528338944?refine=poster&ref_=rgmi_ref_pos

Japanese version: http://eigatirashi.com/

Animation movie posters can be designed variously. The original poster of "*Frozen*" (Figure 13) is designed filled with ice. The hue of color gives audience a cold feeling, but the character at the center is not the frozen queen. Instead, it is a cuddly, funny snowman that is the most important memory of the sisters and connection in the whole story. About Japanese poster, it is a visual chaos, whereas it is more accurate about the capacity of characters and the plot happening in a frozen world. As the same, the Japanese "*Kung Fu Panda*" poster (Figure 14) discloses the plot more than the original poster. On Japanese version, the enemy and the master are set off the panda. With the ridiculous action of the panda, Japanese audience can know that he is an edacious panda. About Animation movie posters in Japan, designers seem to release more plot than the original version.

Figure 13. *Frozen*	Figure 14. *Kung Fu Panda*

In Horror movies, "*Vacancy*" (Figure 15) is a totally different example. On western version, designers use the perspective to snoop the characters for audience. The reflection of the motel can arouse audience's curiosity. The atmosphere is grim. Similarly, Japanese poster also has a somber and terrifying atmosphere without other elements, but only an old and broken motel is drawn on the poster to make audience curious. This style, including the background and color, is one of the most familiar skills used on horror animation posters in Japan.

Figure 15. *Vacancy*

After original movie posters are compared to Japanese redesigning posters, it

seems that the elements on film posters to appeal audience in West and in Japan are different. One is iconic image to imagine, and the other is texts and plots to make the movie clear. The western design can be categorized on the basis of the genre of movies. Western movie poster designers emphasize the graphic elements and atmosphere more than texts. Yet, Japanese movie posters are redesigned to have relation to the plots, and use honors or advertising words to attract Japanese to see movies. The diverse cultures and perspectives of audience lead to interesting and meaningful film posters in each country.

Conclusion

The redesigning of movie posters can be detected from many countries like Korea, Russia, Netherland, and so on. Nevertheless, Japan is the best well-known country to repackage foreign movie posters for Japanese audience. The movie posters of Japanese version have such a value for film poster collectors because of the creativity, specific aesthetics, and great diversity from original version; yet, the academic research of the redesigning movie posters are rare. In the future, the academia is hoped to have more research of the movie poster design in the view of cultures and other interesting factors. It will be helpful for movie industry to have new strategies combined with cultures on film posters, and make a movie itself and the package better. Otherwise, it would be a pity for audience to just have a glimpse of movie posters without having a deeper insight to the design, cultures, customs, and marketing strategies behind an original or repackaging film poster.

Works Cited

Bao, Xiao-Xia. "The Secret of Movie Posters." *IRead.* 14 Oct. 2014. Web. 23 Nov. 2014.

Berndt, Jaqueline. "The Function of Manga Culture." *Nippon.com*. 31 July, 2012.

Web. 20 Feb. 2015.

Bremner, Brian. "In Japan, Cute Conquers All." *Bloomberg*. 24 June, 2002. Web. 15
    Feb. 2015.

Carpente, Mathew. "Seven Elements of a Great Movie Poster Design." *Webdesigner
    Depot*. 18 Feb., 2011. Web. 5 May 2015.

Chu, Shan-Chieh. "Study of the Application of the Comics on Animation－Using the
    Cartoon Style and the Comics Symbols as the Key." Taiwan: National Taiwan
    University of Arts, 2004. 50-75. Print.

Fujiki, Hideaki. "Movie Advertisements and the Formation of a New Visual
    Environment in Interwar Japan." *Japan Forum* 23.1 (2011): 68-95. Print.

 "Japanese Popular Culture." *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia
    Foundation, Inc. June 2012. Web. 22 Feb. 2015.

Keene, Donald. "Japanese Aesthetics." *Philosophy East and West* 19.3 (1969):
    293-306. Print.

Koren, Leonard. "Wabi-Sabi Spiritual Values." *Wabi-Sabi: For Artists, Designers,
    Poets & Philosophers*. 2008. 46-54. Print.

Lee, Hong. "Different Cultural Backgrounds of the Poster Design." China: Yanshan
    University, 2010. 5-10. Print.

Lee, Hsien-Hui. "The Element of Art: Colors." *The Learning of Visual Literacy*. 3
    April, 2015. Web. 3 May 2015.

Lin, Jun-Jie. "A Study of Negative Visual Propagations in Poster Design—Base on
    the Examples of "Discover Asia International Poster Exhibition." *Journal of
    Plastic Arts*. 2003. 365-378. Print.

Liu, Di. "Manga Affects Two Japanese Generations." *People.com.* 17 August, 2004.
    Web. 20 Apr. 2015.

Mcgray, Douglas. "Japan's Gross National Cool." *Foreign Policy* 130 (2002): 44-54.

    Print.

Miller, Mara. "Teaching Japanese Aesthetics: Whys and Hows for Non-Specialists."

    Aesthetics On-line. 1996. Web. 20 Dec. 2014.

Rivadulla, Eladio, Jr. and Jessica Gibbs. "The Film Poster in Cuba." *Design Issues*

    16.2 (2000): 36-44. Print.

Rhodes, Gary D. "The Origin and Development of the American Moving Picture

    Poster." *Film History* 19.3 (2007): 228-46. Print.

Su, Jing. "Japan Advertising Artists Club: Create a Golden Age of Japanese Design."

    Knowing Japanese Design. 2014. 10-11. Print.

Steven, Rachael. "A History of Japanese Poster Art." *Creative Review*. 21 Feb. 2014.

    Web. 26 Dec. 2014.

Thornton, Richard S. "Japanese Posters: The First 100 Years." *Design Issues* 6.1

    (1989): 4-14. Print.

Wu, Wen-Jia. "Modern Japanese Design and the Spirit Japanese Traditional Culture."

    Hundred Schools in Arts. 2007. 70-72. Print.

Yang, Ming-Zhu. "The Influence of Japanese Manga and Animation is Everywhere."

    The Epoch Times. 2 Sep., 2006. Web. 20 Feb. 2015.

Zhang, Ya-Hui. "It Is More Popular Despite of an Economic Depression. Global Film

    Profits Are Going to Exceed One Trillion Dollars." *TVBS*. 14 June, 2014. Web.

    26 Dec. 2014.

Zhang, Yin-Liang. "The Study of Visual Signs on Movie Posters." China: Xi'an

    Polytechnic University, 2012. 2-8. Print.

Zhu, E. "Japanese Posters in 20th Century." *Japanese Style*. China: Guangxi Arts

    Publishing House, 2001. Print.