Exploring the Attractive Attributes and Consumer Preferences for Dream Cake

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Abstract. The study is mainly to understand consumer preference toward the charm of cake decoration via in-depth interview. Through the interview of 37 participants, we could understand the awareness of consumers to dream cake decoration and provide a physical and theoretical charm factor analysis via evaluation grid method. From the experimental results, it is known that the major factors constituting the charm of dream cake are style, technique, theme, colour, while the abstract image and physical features and properties constituting these four factors are known as well. From abstract aspect, the dream cakes are considered lovely sweet and fun. As to physical aspect, the dream cakes are featured at brilliant skill, matured technique and exquisite. After subsequent verification, the results may be used as references and guidelines for dream cake decoration in the future.

1. Introduction

Following the progress of world and cultural enhancement, foods are no longer to ally human’s hunger but to feel and enjoy the gourmet foods. Lu [1] indicated that the foods and beverages are gradually used to stress the visual, smell, touch, taste and sound such five senses for marketing. That is, the “cultural content”, “experiencing process” such entire sense joyfulness of eating are valued more and more. In recent years, people love both traditional bread and big cake in early age and exquisite cake and stylish donut now. The diversified styles, colours and flavours of baking products may stimulate people’s sense and further arouse the desire for eating. Among them, the cake is the top choice. Through stylish creativity, technical presentation, the cake may lead the trend and attract consumer to check in and share.

All kinds of stylish cakes were introduced to the market successively. From common fruit or chocolate to cartoon character and fantasy cakes aiming at the wedding or even the “customized” stylish cake according to different needs of customers, they all gradually change the traditional consumption ways of consumers in Taiwan [2]. Tseng [3] pointed out that charm is an important enzyme to promote civilization, social development, energetic life and emotional soul, which is closely related to human’s felling and important content and motivation in life. Charm itself has unique feature generating different charm awareness to different groups. To attract specific users, you must touch them to arouse the sympathy [4]. Therefore, the study takes extremely charming edible
craft-dream cake as example to discuss the perception and the preference factors to dream cakes. The main purposes of study are as follows:

1. The perception and evaluation of consumers toward dream cakes.
2. The study of charm property preferences of consumers to dream cakes.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Dream cake

The cake decoration not only provides bakers a stage showing their professional technique to advance the appearance of cake, but also includes the purposes of adding flavor of cake and extending the preservation period of cake [5]. With fresh cream decoration, simulation via chocolate and sugar such materials, current cakes overturn the traditional fresh cream style and gradually form the trend in Taiwan. The dream name of cake is mainly derived from the details of cake that may highlight the taste. The cakes with fine and delicate embellishment symbolize the hope, happiness and eternity. The hands of current bakers have skills to create the extremely similar cakes like magicians. Meanwhile, the characters played by the cakes are not just simple one. The wedding cakes only have country, jewellery, flower, colour painting styles. The themes of cakes not just mean the happiness, but also the beautiful scenery in wedding. When the wedding cake encounters with beautiful flowers running into a romantic and elegant time, the entire cake may look simple and elegant even there is a flower only. The cakes may please the eyes through different decoration skills or adding other elements like strawberry, matcha, chocolate blending in the pastry, allowing them be more colourful. In addition to increase the business value, different bakers or cake operators have their own exclusive recipe appearing the myriads of flavours [6]. Nevertheless, the main purpose is to get eye-attracting cake style.

2.2 Miryoku engineering and evaluation grid method

“Miryoku engineering” was the study initiated by Japanese scholar Masato Ujigawa altogether with several scholars for the purpose of “the technology and knowledge of creating charming products and space” [7]. Lu [8] mentioned that Miryoku engineering is no longer limited to physical product development flow, but the study from the connection between human sense and product to the conversion of people’s feeling against industrial experiences. In recent years, there are many researches start using Miryoku engineering to extract industrial experiences or local charm factors. Along with increasing of consumption awareness, the product development trend was turned to consumer-oriented. Consumers not only require for basic functions, the look, comfort and individual demand are all important considerations of consumers as selecting the products. The “evaluation grid method” in Miryoku engineering is an important study approach. It is an approach originated from psychology to catch personal knowledge and summarize the ideas. It summarizes individual characters of target subject after discussing the similarity or differences among the subjects mainly by using personal interview. By applying evaluation grid method the reasons why consumers or users would be attracted are discussed via in-depth interview to further lead the participants to convert their ideas to more specifically to physical reasons and abstract senses and then summarize the true thinking of participants. The study expects to catch the charm of cake from participants through preceding features of evaluation grid method under Miryoku engineering abovementioned to facilitate the analysis.

2.3 Food design

In general, it is hard to imagine that mode or tools design and production may be a part of food design. In fact, not just eating is related with food design, all the patter or appearance of food mode produced for purpose or request, e.g. the egg cakes loved by both adults and children with various modes in shape of rooster, gun, Patrick Star, flower or tools allowing smoother eating or cooking process are all included in “Design for Food”, i.e. the more familiar “Product Design” [9]. The food based design
elements and materials to change the texture, appearance, colour or flavour for the purpose of passing a thought, message or adding five-sense experiences are categorized as Food Design.

3. Research method

3.1 Subjects of in-depth interview
The study has invited 37 participants aged 20-35 to interview their perception and reasons for favourable dream cake decoration. It is to understand their perception to dream cakes and conclude the charm factor evaluation grid drawing through in-depth interview.

3.2 Work selection
The study collects 50 pictures of dream cakes produced by famous baking fondant classroom teachers. All teachers have cake related certificates and led students for competition abroad and served as judges. The works are exquisite and ingenious examples with high standards. 5 other baking professional teachers and 5 consumers select final 15 samples through discussion of focus group as shown in table 1.

| No. | Dream cake pictures                                      |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Angel’s secret angel place                               |
| 2   | European image                                           |
| 3   | Purple magic house                                       |
| 4   | Run wild                                                 |
| 5   | Pinky party                                              |
| 6   | Alice in wonderland                                      |
| 7   | Fantasy carousel                                         |
| 8   | Baby only                                                |
| 9   | Splendid years                                           |
| 10  | Journal time                                             |
| 11  | Magic time                                               |
| 12  | Sweet date                                               |
| 13  | Affection                                                |
| 14  | Greenhouse lady                                          |
| 15  | Sweet talk                                               |

3.3 Interview steps
The study asks interviewees to select 5 pictures representing dream cake most. Meanwhile, the interviewees are requested to explain the reason for selecting such pictures such as technique, creativity, charm etc. It is to understand the perception and evaluation of consumers toward dream cakes via the interview, and conduct the study of charm preference at the same time. The interview questions are as shown in table 2.

4. Research results

4.1 Dream cake preference research
The research aiming at the consumer preferences to dream cake, The ranking of dream cakes is shown as table 3.
### Table 2. Interview Questions

| No. | Question                                                                                                                                 |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Pick the top five which you feel most dreamlike among the 15 pictures (write down the No.)                                                   |
| 2   | Why would you like these five cakes? (is it look adorable? attractive? vivid color? or...)                                           |
| 3   | How do you feel about the technique (skill) of these five cakes? (exquisite? absolutely lifelike? or...)                                 |
| 4   | What do you think about the creativity of these five cakes? (Similarity? have story? or...)                                           |
| 5   | What is the event that you think is most appropriate to use these five cakes? Why? (E.g.: wedding, because it is symbol of romance and dream or formal event because the fine technique makes the cake like the art). Please tell your own opinions |

### Table 3. Ranking of Dream Cakes

| Rank | No.   | Picture       | Votes | %   |
|------|-------|---------------|-------|-----|
| 1    | No.7  | Fantasy carousel | 28    | 15% |
| 2    | No.11 | Magic time    | 24    | 13% |
| 3    | No.6  | Alice in wonderland | 19    | 10% |
| 4    | No.9  | Splendid years | 15    | 8%  |
| 5    | No.8  | Baby only     | 13    | 7%  |
| 6    | No.10 | Journal time  | 13    | 7%  |
| 7    | No.2  | European image | 11    | 6%  |
| 8    | No.15 | Sweet talk    | 11    | 6%  |
| 9    | No.3  | Purple magic house | 10    | 6%  |
| 10   | No.1  | Angel’s secret angel place | 9     | 5%  |
| 11   | No.4  | Run wild      | 8     | 5%  |
| 12   | No.5  | Pinky party   | 8     | 4%  |
| 13   | No.4  | Greenhouse lady | 8     | 4%  |
| 14   | 12    | Sweet date    | 6     | 3%  |
| 15   | 13    | Affection     | 2     | 1%  |

The score of No. 7 fantasy carousel is the highest, accounting for 15%, followed by No. 11 magic time 13%, and third place No. 6 Alice in wonderland 10%, fourth place No. 9 splendid years 8%, fifth place No. 8 baby only 7%. According to analysis of ranking, the reasons of some participants for picking top (1) Theme: the colour combination of cake is adorable and sweet, and very skilful while
the butter decoration technique is super, very creative and full of story. The creation aiming at the theme will be very beautiful, graceful in style and show due respect in the table 3. (2) Colour: colours are vivid and riot, bringing happiness feeling to people! It is fine, exquisite and romantic. (3) Technique: I think the style and colours of this cake is extremely skilful. The technique is covered in the craftsmanship is stunning and breaks general thinking of cake. Its unique creativity may highlight the distinctive taste and style of host in private event. (4) Style: the pink cake with flower for decoration is very beautiful in layers. It is very delicate and romantic, making people falling in love. It is very suitable for the wedding because who can resist the fine and romantic style! It is known from the explanation of interviewees that they value the aesthetics prevented by the theme, colour, technique and style. Similarly, if the colour of cake is not vivid enough, the thematic expression is not clear and less layering or the technique is common in term of exquisite and fineness, the preferences of interviewees would be lower.

4.2 Evaluation grid method
The summary of interview content is concluded in the charm factors of dream cake for the evaluation grid method map, shown as figure 1. According to the interview results, the charm factors of dream cakes are mainly divided into style (appearance), technique, and theme and colour such four factors.

Figure 1. Evaluation grid method map of charm factors for dream cake

Through the description of interviewees for the charm of dream cake, the charm of cake could be from physical factors such as – colour allocation, layering style, fine skill, special holidays like birthday party, wedding, anniversary activities etc. or from abstract factors such as – existence like in fairy tale, gorgeous, elegant, beautiful, similarity, dreamlike and happiness feeling etc. It could be seen
that charm has inside and outside factors. Just as Tseng [3] mentioned that charm is an important is enzyme to promote civilization, social development, energetic life and emotional soul, which is closely related to human’s felling and important content and motivation in life. That is, charm is a kind of attraction and effect. Meanwhile, with proof of evaluation grid method, the top five dream cakes have features of charm factors above-mentioned, e.g. dreamlike, vivid colour, beautiful, romantic, clear layers such factors. Relatively, the cakes in last five places are relatively lack of such characters and therefore are fewer selected. The study may determine what is the request of interviewees for the presentation and appeal of cakes.

5. Conclusion
According to preceding results, the map of evaluation grid method is established accordingly and four original charm factors style, theme, technique, colour, 10 physical charm factors and 15 abstract charm factors are concluded. In addition, it is found from the arrangement of interviews, among the original charm repeatedly mentioned by different interviewees, the style, theme, technique and colour are mostly identified by the interviewees. In respect of physical charm factors, the most frequently mentioned factors are vivid colour, followed by colourful, skilful, exquisite and fine, representative; the most frequently mentioned abstract factor by the interviewees is romantic, followed by dreamlike, story, fairy tale, happiness and beauty. To satisfy the market and customer demands, identify the emotional requirement of consumers and provide services more satisfactory to economic effects and sensible by customers, it is hoped to increase the number of interviewees, use integrated charm evaluation grid of cake decoration as basis for subsequent questionnaire design, use extensive samples to verify the charm factors of cake decoration to confirm the reliability and validity of charm factor. Meanwhile, find the definite charm and identify the differences of customer demands through more complete research results as basis of references for dream cake decoration design of businesses in the future.

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