

An Analysis of Chinese Tea Brand Packaging Design in the Context of New National Color

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Abstracts: Under the guidance of the new national color design concept, Chinese tea brand packaging design is in a transitional period of integrating traditional and modern elements. This study aims to analyze the packaging design practice under this trend. Through case studies of different tea brands with various varieties and regional cultural backgrounds, such as Fujian Zhengshantang, Hunan Anhua black tea, and Yunnan Pu'er tea, this paper reveals the formation of different tea brand packaging styles and design concepts under the new national color background. The study explores the integration of innovation and tradition, the in-depth expression of cultural connotations, and the innovation of consumer interactive experiences. This study adopts a qualitative analysis method, combined with interviews with brand designers and business managers, to explore the new concepts and packaging design strategies of tea brand packaging design in the context of the new national color. The study found that the new national color design not only successfully conveys the unique charm and cultural depth of tea culture but also further promotes international exchanges in tea culture and enhances the international image and market competitiveness of Chinese tea culture.

Keywords: New national beauty; Tea brand; Packaging design; Innovative thinking

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1. Introduction

As the earliest country to cultivate tea, China boasts a rich and profound tea culture. Tea occupies an important place not only in material culture but also in moral customs, social etiquette, and folk traditions, forming unique tea ceremonies, tea customs, and tea arts that display deep spiritual cultural connotations. As shown in **Figure 1**, in today's globalized market economy, Chinese tea brands face the challenge of integrating traditional culture with modern design concepts. This integration is reflected not only in ideas but also in patterns, text, color craftsmanship, and other aspects, injecting many contemporary elements into modern tea packaging art design to meet the demands of modernization, premium quality, popularization, and market-oriented development trends.

This study aims to explore the design styles of Chinese tea brands under the "New National Color" background and their application in packaging design. The specific objectives are as follows.

To analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the current packaging design of Chinese tea brands; To use several representative tea brand packaging design cases as samples to analyze how these brands reflect unique Chinese culture and design styles in their packaging design; To explore specific strategies for innovative packaging design of tea brands under the “New National Color” design concept.



Figure 1. Integration of traditional phoenix patterns in modern Chinese tea packaging design

2. Literature review

Chinese tea packaging design ingeniously combines traditional and modern elements, reflecting a profound integration of culture and aesthetics while strengthening the connection between brands and consumers ^[1]. Zhao Jinxia, in her paper “The Relationship between Chinese Tea Culture and Modern Tea Packaging Art Design”, was the first to systematically explore the integration of tea culture design elements with modern design, establishing a theoretical system and strategy for the development of tea culture ^[1]. Yu Qiuyu, in his book “The Supreme Aesthetics”, uses calligraphy, Kunqu opera, and Pu’er tea to demonstrate the uniqueness and profound connotation of Chinese aesthetics. He emphasizes the core position of these cultural elements in Chinese culture and their impact on the aesthetic psychology of the Chinese people ^[2]. Lu Jinghu, in his article “The Cultural Breakthrough Behind the Rise of National Style”, explores the integration of modern design with the traditional culture ^[3]. Li Jun, in “The Application Value of Text and Color in Tea Packaging Design”, discusses the importance of text and color in tea packaging ^[4]. Shu Zujun and Xia Yebao, in “The Application of Green Packaging Design Concept in Tea Packaging Design”, emphasize the use of environmentally friendly materials and the opposition to excessive packaging ^[5]. Long et al., in “The Construction of Story-Telling Illustration in Tea Packaging Design”, discuss how storytelling illustrations in tea packaging can enhance product quality and brand image ^[6]. In 2023, Teadelight.net examined the latest trends in tea packaging design, including tea boxes and tea cans, highlighting innovative elements such as unique layouts, tactile textures, and retro aesthetics that help brands stand out in a competitive market ^[7].

Overall, these documents are mainly composed of journals and academic papers. However, the existing studies have a high degree of repetitiveness, and the content is somewhat complex. In the context of contemporary information and intelligentization, Chinese tea packaging design is undergoing a transformation. From the perspectives of brand value, social value, ecological value, and cultural value, Chinese tea brand packaging design is forming its unique advantages. However, the current tea packaging design generally faces the problem of homogeneity. Some designs are too

complex, using too many decorative elements and bright colors, causing visual clutter and fatigue, and affecting the effective transmission of product characteristics and quality.

2.1. The value and significance of the new national color design context for Chinese tea brand packaging design

As a modern concept in tea packaging design, cultural connotation holds strong vitality and broad market prospects. It satisfies people's refreshing visual aesthetics and cultural experiences, serving as an interactive and aesthetic form in market economic activities. As shown in **Figure 2**, Through the superficial form of packaging, deeper cultural connotations are imparted, enhancing the product's added value and developing into a new form of cultural and economic brand culture. The "new national color" is a product of the times, advocated by the state in the literary and artistic circles, embodying the spirit of national style in a new era of color. Its basic definition is to inherit ancient culture, promote new national styles, and use concise language to express the practical significance of the new era, new market, new aesthetics, and new concepts in contemporary life. This aims to achieve a simple yet profound artistic effect, undoubtedly forming a new cultural and economic model.

In today's vast cultural system, Chinese tea culture is a crucial aspect of the Chinese cultural sphere. In "Aesthetics of the Best", Yu Qiuyu states: "To be qualified as the best in culture, at least five characteristics are needed: exclusivity, top quality, specificity, common knowledge, and longevity." With its irreplaceable and excellent qualities, Yu recommends Pu'er Tea, Kunqu Opera, and Calligraphy as the best of the characteristics. From the perspective of the "New National Color" design context, enhancing the status of Chinese tea culture globally, developing Chinese tea brand packaging design, and cultural dissemination hold significant commercial value and strategic importance. Chinese tea packaging design integrates traditional Chinese cultural elements to convey China's unique charm and profound history to the world, showcasing the diversity of tea culture and the rich variety of Chinese tea and tea production processes. This promotes recognition and loyalty to Chinese tea brands in the international market and encourages cultural diversity exchange and sharing.

Sophisticated packaging design enhances the product's added value and market competitiveness, expands overseas market share, and promotes the globalization of the entire tea industry. This represents the height of cultural innovation, combining the beauty of design creativity with the broad use of traditional design elements and symbols. It provides new thinking for tea products, forming a new model.



Figure 2. Tao Yuan Ming black tea packaging, photo sourced from author

2.2. Analysis of Chinese tea brand packaging design in the new national color context

The packaging of Chinese tea brands in the context of the new national style needs comprehensive analysis to adapt to modern consumers' needs and aesthetic trends. Aesthetician Zong Baihua proposed the concept of the “new national style,” believing that “the new national style should be an artistic expression combining traditional Chinese cultural characteristics with modern society. By excavating and inheriting the essence of traditional culture and integrating it with the innovation and diversity of modern art, we can create art with Chinese characteristics and modern consciousness.” Zong Baihua’s aesthetic discussion provides essential theoretical support and inspiration for the context of new national-style tea brand packaging design.

3. Case study of packaging design for famous Chinese tea brands

3.1. Fujian Zhengshantang brand

As shown in **Figure 3**, Zhengshantang is a famous tea brand in China, and its packaging design highlights the brand’s characteristics and traditional cultural elements. The primary color in the design is red, and the patterns feature natural shapes of plants and flowers, combined with elements of the Minnan culture as background decoration. Several special packaging printing techniques unify the overall packaging style and visual elements. Consumers can feel the association with the local environment and black tea categories in Fujian when purchasing. As shown in **Figure 4**, the packaging design of the Jin Jun Mei “Happiness” 500 g gift box incorporates innovative new black tea varieties into traditional craftsmanship, creating a national style with classical Song Dynasty aesthetics. The design is positioned as a prestigious tea gift for a fashionable lifestyle label, made of solid wood, with a beautiful magpie in spring, hand-painted lacquer painting, and carefully carved gold patterns, presenting a festive, lively, noble, dignified, and luxurious effect. The middle of the gift box is designed with traditional openwork carvings, handmade, delicate, smooth, and uniquely textured. The relief Zhengshantang Lishu logo is elegant and atmospheric, and the exquisite details highlight the tea’s noble quality. However, from an environmentally friendly design perspective, this top-grade black tea packaging design has the problem of over-packaging, using excessive material and complicated processes, with each box costing nearly 200 RMB.



Figure 3. Zhengshantang Jin Jun Mei black tea packaging, photographed by the author



Figure 4. Zhengshantang Jin Jun Mei “Happiness” 500 g gift box packaging, photographed by the author

3.2. Anhua black tea brand

As shown in **Figure 5**, black brick tea is a specialty tea from Hunan. Due to differences in the production environment and production process, the packaging of Anhua black tea is unique, presenting a distinctive quality style and regional characteristics. Additionally, the historical and cultural elements of Anhua black tea, represented by the ancient tea-horse road, form the foundational cultural tradition of its packaging design. Whether it is the Yongxi century-old tea house, tea steles, tea pavilions, wind and rain bridges, corridors, or the “last horse caravan” in Gaocheng Village in Jiangnan, Anhua’s tea poems, tea books, tea gatherings, tea ceremonies, tea arts, and tea customs are all witnesses to the history of black tea culture. Therefore, black tea packaging has a strong and profound regional cultural expression.

From the Baisha River and Gaoma River brands, their packaging designs all possess a strong regional flavor. As shown in **Figure 6**, the packaging designs of black tea products such as aged tea and bamboo baskets predominantly utilize simple traditional packaging materials characteristic of Hunan, such as bamboo baskets, cloth bags, hemp ropes, and kraft paper. In terms of packaging, the unique tight shape of black tea is used, which is formed into bricks, cakes, and columns during the tea-making process. This method is the best way to make tea, and most importantly, the packaging design carries a strong and profound cultural heritage. The physical form of the tea packaging also determines the appearance of the tea in terms of its use, storage time, and method; the traditional simplicity and naturalness of the Anhua black tea process naturally form a rich, dark black, yellow, and brown color. This simple presentation reflects the unique Chinese elements in the packaging design and the local, simple cultural spirit of Anhua black tea.



Figure 5. Baishaxi black brick tea packaging



Figure 6. Black tea packaging using bamboo basket material

3.3. Yunnan Liu Cha Fang tea brand

As shown in **Figure 7**, Yunnan Liu Cha Fang is a brand dedicated to creating a new way of drinking tea. Facing the new generation of consumers, the brand reinterprets the six tea cultures with the most Chinese characteristics, namely Green Tea, White Tea, Black Tea, Oolong Tea, Black Tea, and Yellow Tea, illustrating the young people’s understanding and definition of traditional Chinese tea culture. The product packaging revolves around the six tea characteristics, presenting the corresponding color tones in special typography.

In the design of the box, the new packaging style is interpreted through the three-pronged

structural modeling from the decomposition of units and combinations to form one. The change and differentiation of the packaging structure reflect the brand's new concept of drinking tea, and the fresh and soft color scheme looks comfortable and pleasant, adding a sense of beauty to the colors. It expresses the brand's simple, distinctive, free, and fashionable personality.



Figure 7. Yunnan Liu Cha Fang series packaging

3.4. The “new national color” context of tea brand packaging design concept and design

In the context of “new national colors,” emphasis is placed on fashion and culture, individuality, and creativity, so the design should pay more attention to the emotional resonance with different countries, regions, and consumer groups, highlighting the characteristics and uniqueness of the product.

4. Design strategy and methodology

4.1. Tea brand packaging design concepts and strategies in the context of “new national color”

4.1.1. Minimalist design

Adopt a simple design style, removing redundant decorations and complex patterns, and highlight the essence and characteristics of the product.

4.1.2. Eco-friendly materials

Choose environmentally sustainable packaging materials, such as biodegradable paper packaging, recyclable paper boxes, or paper bags, reflecting the brand's concern for social responsibility.

4.1.3. Natural elements

Combine the nature and characteristics of tea, using natural elements or traditional Chinese cultural symbols as design inspiration, showcasing the natural and healthy image of tea.

4.1.4. Innovative structures

Design innovative packaging structures to make tea packaging more convenient and practical.

4.1.5. Integration of cultural elements

Integrate some traditional Chinese cultural elements into the simple packaging design, showcasing the aesthetics of the new national style and the unique charm of tea culture.

4.1.6. Conveyance of information

Highlight basic information about tea, such as the type of tea, its origin, and the production process.

4.1.7. Interactive experience

Combine internet technology in the design to provide more information about the product and interactive experience, and increase the emotional value of the product by conveying the brand story and history of tea culture through the packaging.

4.2. Interviews and observations

“As a brand with 400 years of history, Zhengshantang Black Tea constantly seeks changes and innovations in packaging to adapt to the changes in the market and the new needs of consumers”, Wang Yijie, Marketing Director of Fujian Zhengshantang, emphasized the brand’s innovative spirit in packaging design and image output. Professor Wu Shangjun from Hunan Normal University pointed out in the discussion that “Tea packaging design is not only the external display of quality but also the embodiment of the pursuit of modern quality of life.” With the increase in consumer awareness of tea, the market is gradually subdivided into high, medium, and low levels. Producers and sellers need to carry out appropriate packaging and dissemination according to the quality of tea to enhance product quality. Simple design, environmentally friendly materials, novel structure, integration of cultural elements, and dissemination of information can be adopted. Such a design not only complies with government regulations but also shows the essential characteristics of tea, conveys the connotation of tea culture, and meets the needs of modern consumers for environmental protection, simplicity, and aesthetics. The young generation, as the main force of consumption, is redefining the windvane of the tea consumption market, influencing the target consumer groups, and the need to have a direct hit on the consumer’s impression. Packaging, as an important carrier of the brand’s power to convey, is particularly important in market competition. Innovative product power, high-value packaging, and interesting content can quickly attract the attention of consumers, forming a highly recognizable, personalized, and differentiated brand image.

5. Conclusion

Under the design context of “New National Color,” tea brand packaging design can only face the requirements of modernization, boutique, widespread, and marketization and gradually form its design style and advantages by shaping a unique brand image and simple aesthetic style. The design concept of the new national color emphasizes the inheritance and innovation of traditional Chinese culture, making the tea packaging more culturally connotative and artistically valuable. Researching the new concept and design method of tea brand packaging design in the context of the new national color can further enhance the brand’s popularity and reputation and win the international market’s recognition of China’s tea brand based on consolidating the domestic market. Overall, the practice of the new national color concept in tea brand packaging design brings both opportunities and challenges. Through continuous innovation and efforts, we believe that this design concept will bring a more prosperous and colorful future for Chinese tea brands.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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