



Revitalizing Heritage Through Intergenerational Design: A Youth-Centric Packaging Design for Anhua Dark Tea Based on CHAGEE's Success Model

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Abstract

Background and Aim: With the evolving consumer structure, younger demographics have become the main driving force in China's tea beverage market, demanding products that combine traditional quality with modern aesthetics and convenience. This study focuses on rejuvenating Anhua Dark Tea packaging to align with the lifestyle preferences of young consumers aged 20-39.

Materials and Methods: A multi-method approach was employed, including literature reviews, case analyses of CHAGEE's successful packaging design, field investigations, interviews with industry experts, practical design research, and surveys targeting young consumers to collect feedback and refine design proposals.

Results: The research identified key cultural characteristics of Anhua Dark Tea, such as artisanal uniqueness and historical symbolism, which were insufficiently represented in existing packaging. Analysis of CHAGEE's packaging provided insights into successfully integrating cultural symbols, craftsmanship, and modern functionality, resulting in a novel design framework applied effectively to Anhua Dark Tea.

Conclusion: Through innovative reinterpretation of cultural symbols, balanced functional and aesthetic design, and the integration of digital interactions, this study successfully modernized Anhua Dark Tea packaging. The proposed design effectively addresses young consumers' demands for personalization, sustainability, and cultural resonance, setting a replicable model for rejuvenating traditional tea brands.

Keywords: Packaging Design; Anhua Dark Tea; CHAGEE

Introduction

In recent years, as consumption structures have evolved, China's tea beverage market has undergone significant transformations. The emergence of a new generation of consumers has profoundly influenced market dynamics. According to the "2021 China Youth Quality Tea Beverage Lifestyle Development Trend Report", the population of young consumers has exceeded 380 million, gradually becoming the primary driving force behind the demand for high-quality tea beverages. Among them, Generation Z, the middle class, and female consumers have become crucial forces in the tea beverage market. These groups emphasize lifestyle quality, cultural experiences, and personalized expression in their tea consumption (Figure 1) (iMedia Research, 2022). This consumption trend has spurred innovations in tea packaging design, requiring tea products to not only retain their traditional health benefits but also meet modern consumers' demands for aesthetics and convenience (Li, Zhang et al., 2023).



China's youth demand for quality tea drinks:
new consumer groups become the main consumer group

艾媒咨询
iMedia Research

The size and consumption characteristics of China's new generation of consumer groups in 2021

The size and consumption characteristics of China's new generation of consumer groups in 2021



数据来源：艾媒数据中心(data.iimedia.cn)

样本来源：草莓派数据调查与计算系统 (Strawberry pie) , 样本量: N=2236; 调研时间: 2021年12月

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Figure 1 Scale and Consumption Characteristics of China's New Generation Consumer Group in 2021

Note: Retrieved from iMedia Report Center (<https://report.iimedia.cn/repo149-0/43055.html>)

However, despite the inherent quality advantages of traditional tea beverages, their conventional packaging designs struggle to align with the aesthetic preferences and lifestyles of younger consumers. Many traditional tea products still rely on outdated packaging forms, and the cumbersome brewing process makes them ill-suited to the fast-paced lifestyles of modern young consumers. Anhua Dark Tea, in particular, as a historically rich and culturally valuable tea product, enjoys strong consumer appreciation for its quality and cultural significance. Nevertheless, its conservative packaging design has failed to effectively capture the attention of younger consumers (He & Yan, 2024).

In recent years, CHAGEE, a leading Chinese tea beverage chain brand, has successfully captured the interest of young consumers through its innovative packaging design and culturally integrated brand positioning. By blending modern design elements with traditional tea culture, CHAGEE has crafted a brand image that is both stylish and deeply rooted in cultural heritage, offering a novel tea-drinking experience for the younger generation (Liang, 2024). CHAGEE's packaging design not only emphasizes visual appeal but also incorporates consumer needs for convenience. This successful model provides valuable insights for innovating the packaging design of Anhua Dark Tea.

Although existing studies have examined the influence of packaging design on consumer decision-making (Deng, Zhu & Chen, 2015), there is a notable lack of systematic research on the youth-oriented packaging design of Anhua Dark Tea, particularly regarding how intergenerational design can empower traditional tea products. Current research primarily focuses on modern packaging design trends and young consumer preferences, with limited exploration of how these design concepts can be effectively applied to the packaging innovation of traditional tea products.

Therefore, this study takes Anhua Dark Tea as the research subject, examining its cultural background, product characteristics, and deficiencies in existing packaging design. By analyzing the successful experience of CHAGEE's packaging design, the study identifies key design factors and proposes a feasible experiential model. The ultimate goal is to design and develop modern yet culturally resonant new packaging for Anhua Dark Tea targeted at young consumers aged 20-39. This study aims to facilitate the modernization of traditional tea packaging design, enhance market competitiveness, and fulfill young consumers' diverse needs for personalization, cultural expression, and convenience.

Objectives

1. To study the unique characteristics of Anhua dark tea and its existing packaging.
2. To analyze the key factors contributing to the success of CHAGEE's packaging design.





3. To design and develop packaging of Anhua dark tea for the new generation of consumer groups.

Literature Review

1. Cultural Background and Existing Packaging Design of Anhua Dark Tea

Anhua Dark Tea is one of the most significant representations of traditional Chinese tea culture, distinguished by its profound cultural connotations. Historically, the tea's craftsmanship dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618–907 AD) and gradually developed into a key commercial commodity during the Ming and Qing dynasties. With the expansion of the ancient Tea-Horse Road, Anhua Dark Tea played a vital role in cultural exchange and trade between the Central Plains and the northwestern regions of China (Yang, 2020). Pang (2011) asserts that Anhua Dark Tea is not only synonymous with tea itself but also serves as a cultural bridge between tradition and modernity, as well as between different geographical regions.

Anhua Dark Tea is characterized by its traditional production techniques, notable health benefits, and distinctive flavor profile. It undergoes a unique fermentation process, resulting in a rich aroma and complex taste. The tea liquor is deep in color, offering a mellow and full-bodied flavor, which has gained significant popularity among tea enthusiasts (Chen, Chen & Tang, 2011). These intrinsic qualities not only enhance the market competitiveness of Anhua Dark Tea but also provide substantial cultural and functional inspiration for its packaging design.

Currently, some Anhua Dark Tea brands integrate modern design elements while preserving traditional cultural symbols in their packaging, showcasing great innovation potential. Many brands incorporate traditional motifs such as dragon and phoenix imagery, the “Double Happiness” symbol, and cloud patterns to convey the historical and cultural significance of the tea (He & Yan, 2024). Deng Yishan suggests that combining modern design approaches—such as minimalism and abstract representation—can better align packaging aesthetics with the preferences of younger consumers (Deng, Zhu & Chen, 2015).

However, despite the advancements in existing packaging designs, several challenges persist, particularly in effectively resonating with young consumers. There remains room for improvement in the communication of cultural symbols, the evocation of emotional connections, and the innovation of interactive experiences (Deng, Zhu & Chen, 2015). Therefore, this study will conduct an in-depth exploration of current packaging design trends for Anhua Dark Tea, analyzing both strengths and limitations while proposing innovative design directions that cater to young consumers (aged 20–39). By analyzing the successful packaging design strategies of CHAGEE and integrating them with the cultural and product attributes of Anhua Dark Tea, this research aims to provide theoretical guidance and practical recommendations for the modernization of its packaging.

2. CHAGEE as a Tea Beverage Brand and Its Packaging

CHAGEE is a leading tea beverage brand in China, gaining widespread recognition among young consumers through its innovative packaging design and brand positioning. As a brand that seamlessly integrates modern design with traditional tea culture, CHAGEE has successfully established a stylish yet culturally rich brand identity through its distinctive packaging (Liang, 2024). Currently, CHAGEE operates over 4,000 stores worldwide, making it one of the most popular tea beverage brands among the new generation of consumers. Its packaging design is characterized by bold colors and unique shapes, making its products highly eye-catching on store shelves (Wei, 2024). This design not only aligns with young consumers' pursuit of individuality and aesthetics but also effectively conveys the profound heritage of traditional tea culture (Figure 2).





Figure 2 CHAGEE collaborates with Thyssen Bornemisza National Museum to design packaging for the Monet Garden collection.

Note: Retrieved from <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/LaS6Z5DLuEc7WC4FzIVWAw>

CHAGEE has skillfully combined modern design elements with traditional tea culture symbols. For example, it incorporates patterns and colors rooted in traditional tea culture while integrating contemporary minimalist design principles. This approach ensures that the packaging meets the aesthetic preferences of young consumers while retaining the symbolic essence of tea culture (Liang, 2024). The successful fusion of tradition and modernity has enabled CHAGEE to rapidly expand its market share and gain widespread consumer recognition.

Furthermore, CHAGEE's market expansion in Hunan Province has been remarkably successful. This achievement is attributed not only to its product innovation and marketing strategies but also to the deep-rooted appreciation for traditional tea culture among Hunan consumers (Wei, 2024). As one of the key regions in China's tea culture heritage, Hunan Province holds significant influence, particularly through Anhua Dark Tea, a representative tea product in the region (Yang, 2020). Consequently, CHAGEE's innovative branding and promotional strategies provide valuable insights for Anhua Dark Tea's market development.

Existing research has explored the packaging design and cultural heritage of Anhua Dark Tea to some extent; however, studies that incorporate successful branding experiences as a reference remain insufficient. While prior literature has emphasized aspects such as brand image, cultural integration, and packaging innovation (Pang, 2011), there is still a lack of in-depth analysis on how packaging design can attract young consumers and drive market growth. Therefore, this study aims to examine how CHAGEE's successful packaging design strategies can be leveraged to create a more appealing and youth-oriented packaging solution for Anhua Dark Tea, ultimately enhancing its market penetration among young consumers.

3. Packaging Design Concepts and Theories

Packaging design is not merely about shaping a product's appearance but serves as a vital medium for brand communication and consumer engagement. In recent years, packaging has played an increasingly pivotal role in brand building and marketing, particularly in the tea beverage industry, where visual appeal, functionality, and cultural connotations directly influence consumers' purchasing decisions.

To inform the youth-centric packaging design for Anhua Dark Tea, this study draws upon the following core theories and research methodologies.

3.1 Visual Communication Theory

A primary function of packaging design is to establish connections with consumers through visual elements. Lidwell (2010) posits that the strategic use of color, typography, and imagery can effectively



convey product information and brand values. Dondis's (1974) theory of visual language emphasizes that simplified visual elements can swiftly capture consumer attention and communicate core brand values. Therefore, the rejuvenation of Anhua Dark Tea's packaging should integrate modern design language with traditional tea culture to create visually compelling outcomes.

3.2 Consumer Psychology and Perception

Packaging design profoundly impacts consumer perception and purchasing behavior. Ampuero and Vila (2006) found that visual attractiveness, materials, and color schemes directly shape brand identification and purchase decisions. Packaging can evoke emotional responses through sensory experiences, thereby fostering brand loyalty. According to consumer perception theory, designers must leverage visual cues to shape brand cognition, ensuring packaging is not only aesthetically pleasing but also culturally resonant. Thus, Anhua Dark Tea's new packaging should align with the emotional needs and cultural identity of younger demographics to strengthen brand affinity (Hussain, 2015).

3.3 Functional Design

Functionality in packaging extends beyond product protection to encompass convenience, usability, and sustainability. Garvin (1987)'s "Dimensions of Quality" theory highlights that functional design should address durability and portability—attributes particularly valued in fast-paced modern lifestyles. For Anhua Dark Tea, packaging must balance protective features with the convenience and contemporary appeal demanded by younger consumers.

3.4 Sustainability and Eco-Design

With rising environmental awareness, modern consumers increasingly prioritize corporate social responsibility. McDonough and Braungart's (2010) "Cradle to Cradle" framework underscores sustainability's importance across a product's lifecycle. Studies further indicate that sustainable materials and minimalistic packaging not only meet eco-conscious demands but also enhance brand reputation.

3.5 Color Theory

Color plays a critical role in packaging design by influencing emotional responses and purchase behavior. Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) PAD (Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance) emotional model demonstrates that colors affect consumers' pleasure, arousal, and dominance perceptions. Based on this theoretical framework, packaging design in the food and beverage industry particularly relies on the emotional triggering mechanism of color to establish brand recognition and drive consumer behavior (Shang, 2009). Anhua Dark Tea's packaging should employ emotionally resonant colors to engage younger audiences and communicate brand values.

In summary, packaging design theories provide multidimensional support for revitalizing Anhua Dark Tea's packaging. By synthesizing visual communication, consumer psychology, functionality, and sustainability, the design can cater to youth preferences while preserving traditional tea culture.

Conceptual Framework

This study constructs a conceptual framework to explore the cultural attributes of Anhua Dark Tea and innovative pathways for its packaging design. The research framework (Figure 3) comprises three core components.

First, through literature review and interviews, the study analyzes Anhua Dark Tea's cultural context, product characteristics, and existing packaging formats to clarify its market positioning and brand identity. Second, drawing on CHAGEE's successful model, the study examines its market competitiveness through three lenses—marketing strategies, brand image, and packaging design—to extract transferable design paradigms. Finally, the study distills key packaging design elements, including design philosophy, color psychology, chromatic schemes, and interactive digital design, exploring how modern design techniques can revitalize traditional tea culture for younger audiences.

The ultimate objective is to synthesize these findings into a youth-centric (ages 20–39) packaging design proposal for Anhua Dark Tea, enhancing its market appeal and advancing brand modernization.



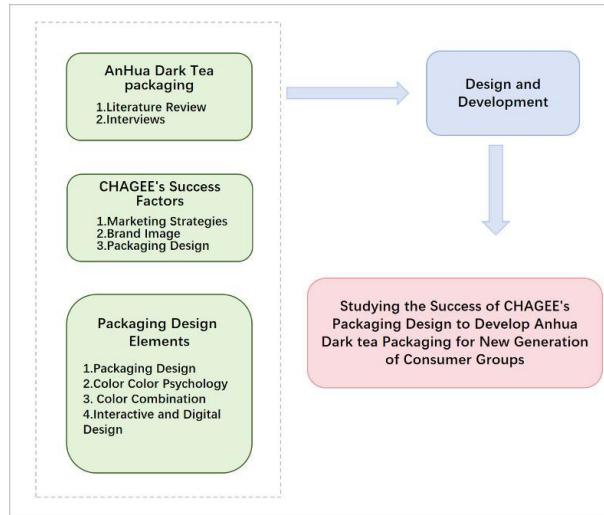


Figure 3 Conceptual Framework

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Methodology

This study employs a multi-tiered analytical approach, integrating literature review, case analysis, field investigation, interviews, design practice research, and user surveys to ensure systematic and targeted research. The key research steps are as follows:

1. Literature Review

A systematic literature review is conducted to examine Anhua Dark Tea's historical development, production techniques, cultural symbolism, and market status, providing insights into packaging design trends within the tea industry.

2. Case Analysis

This study selects CHAGEE, a renowned neo-Chinese tea beverage brand, as a typical case. Through systematic analysis of its five core packaging series—the Red Series, Blue-and-White Porcelain Series, Blue-Red Series, Minimalist Fresh Series, and Black-Gold Series—we deconstruct its innovative practices in brand positioning, design language, and marketing strategies. The aim is to summarize its successful strategies in attracting young consumers and to extract key design elements applicable to the packaging design of Anhua Dark Tea.

3. Field Investigation & Interviews

Field research is conducted in Anhua County, Hunan Province, involving semi-structured interviews with three key groups—tea farmers, tea merchants, and packaging design experts (n=10)—to gain an in-depth understanding of Anhua Dark Tea and its product attributes.

4. Packaging Design Exploration

Building on preliminary literature and case analyses, packaging design concepts are developed to align with Anhua Dark Tea's cultural identity, with a focus on visual language, cultural symbolism, and functional design.

5. User Surveys & Feedback Collection

To validate the design proposals, this study combines questionnaire surveys and interviews to gather feedback from younger consumers. The survey targets 100 respondents aged 20–39, assessing four dimensions: visual appeal, cultural resonance, functionality/usability, and purchase intent. Additionally, industry professionals (e.g., tea enterprise representatives, designers, and marketers) are invited for in-depth discussions to provide expert insights for further refinement.

6. Design Optimization & Final Proposal

Based on user feedback, the packaging design is iteratively refined to balance Anhua Dark Tea's cultural authenticity with the aesthetic and functional preferences of younger consumers. The final output is presented as a comprehensive packaging design solution (Figure 4).

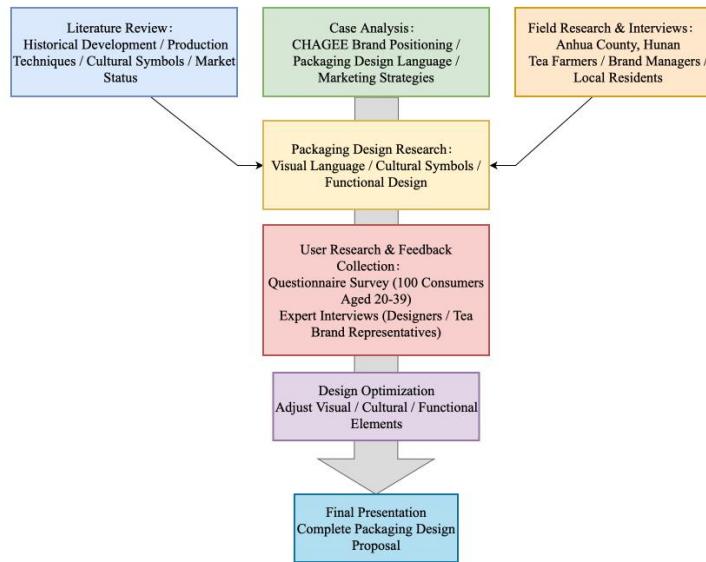


Figure 4 Research Method Flowchart

Note: Constructed by the researcher

Results

1. Cultural Characteristics and Brand Value of Anhua Dark Tea

The study reveals that the cultural identity of Anhua Dark Tea manifests in three dimensions—artisanal uniqueness, historical continuity, and cultural symbolism—which collectively form its cultural essence and brand value foundation.

First, Anhua Dark Tea possesses distinctive artisanal value. Its post-fermentation process and the resulting “Golden Flowers” (Eurotium cristatum colonies) endow the tea with a characteristically mellow, smooth flavor and aged aroma. Notably, the bioactive compounds (e.g., Eurotium cristatum derivatives) in these colonies confer health benefits such as lipid reduction and digestion enhancement, establishing their reputation as “liquid gold” in tea.

Second, the tea carries profound historical significance. From its role in the Tang Dynasty's Tea-Horse Road trade to its status as a “tribute tea” during the Ming-Qing periods, Anhua Dark Tea transcended economic exchange to become a cultural emblem of borderland interactions between central plains and northwestern ethnic groups.

Third, it embodies rich cultural symbolism. The “Golden Flowers” serve as a dual visual-quality icon that can be leveraged as a core brand IP, communicating narratives of “natural bounty” and “artisanal mastery” through packaging and marketing. Concurrently, elements like ancient techniques and the Tea-Horse Road legacy construct a “living fossil of tea history” identity, positioning it as a custodian of traditional tea culture.

In summary, the cultural identity of Anhua Dark Tea emerges from the interplay of craftsmanship, heritage, and symbolism, providing substantial cultural capital for brand innovation.

2. Current Packaging Design Landscape and Optimization Pathways

To assess existing packaging designs, this study selected three representative brands based on market ranking, specialization, and cultural innovation. The selection process involved:

Step 1: Excluding non-specialist competitors from the top-10 market brands. (Figure 5)

Step 2: Choosing the top-3 sellers for market representativeness.

Step 3: Expert evaluations (by three packaging designers) of visual innovation, cultural expression, and consumer appeal.

Result:

Brand A (Baishaxi)
 Brand B (Zhongcha)
 Brand C (Xiangyi Tea)



Figure 5 Top Ten Brands Ranking of Anhua Dark Tea

Note: Constructed by the researcher

The analysis reveals that existing packaging designs can be categorized into three types: basic, gift, and innovative, each demonstrating distinct characteristics (Table 1).

Basic packaging primarily utilizes simple paper boxes and bamboo containers. While meeting practical needs for daily consumption, these designs commonly exhibit insufficient visual appeal and weak moisture/compression resistance. For example, Baishaxi's basic packaging emphasizes only functional information, lacking aesthetic consideration. Zhongcha's packaging shows better compression resistance but performs poorly in humid environments.

Gift packaging typically employs rigid materials and incorporates traditional elements like landscape patterns and calligraphy to convey brand heritage. However, the application of cultural symbols tends to be homogenized, limiting innovation. Zhongcha's gift packaging, for instance, maintains a traditional style that struggles to attract younger consumers.

Innovative packaging attempts to combine eco-friendly materials with smart technologies, yet demonstrates low technical integration. Xiangyi Tea's incorporation of intangible cultural heritage elements, for example, lacks systematic design implementation.



Table 1 Comparative Analysis of Brand Packaging Designs

| Anhua dark tea Brand | Basic Packaging | Gift Box Packaging | Innovative Packaging |
|----------------------|--|--|---|
| Similarities | Basic packaging is straightforward and functional, lacking modern aesthetics and visual appeal. It offers limited protection against moisture and external damage, making it suitable for short-term storage. | Gift box packaging uses rigid materials and integrates cultural symbols to reflect the brand's history and values. It is ideal for high-end gifts or business occasions. | Innovative packaging focuses on design, combining modern elements with brand culture to appeal to younger consumers. It uses eco-friendly materials, underscoring the brand's commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. |
| Differences | Brand A: The brand information is clear, but the design lacks appeal, serving only basic needs. Brand B: The packaging can withstand light external pressure but is not suitable for humid conditions. Brand C: The design is traditional and inexpensive, with limited visual appeal. | Brand A: Focuses on detail and elegance, but lacks innovation, with minimal cultural symbols. Brand B: The design is elegant, fitting for the high-end market, though the traditional style limits its appeal. Brand C: Highlights cultural elements and uses traditional craftsmanship, appealing to a specific consumer group. | Brand A: Combines traditional and modern elements, attracting younger consumers, though the cultural expression is somewhat weak. Brand B: Incorporates brand storytelling and illustrations to enhance brand recognition, appealing to personalized consumer groups. Brand C: Uses intangible cultural heritage elements (e.g., traditional square shapes), blending cultural significance with modern aesthetics to increase brand value. |

To address these issues, the study proposes three optimization approaches focusing on cultural symbols, functional upgrades, and technological integration:

1) In-depth exploration and innovation of cultural symbols: Avoid superficial symbol accumulation by focusing on core values like the “Golden Flowers” fermentation technique and regional climate characteristics, using visual design to strengthen consumer recognition.

2) Balancing functionality and aesthetics: Improve basic packaging's sealing and compression resistance while adopting lightweight eco-materials to enhance portability. Gift packaging should break free from traditional color schemes by incorporating modern minimalist styles to expand its audience.

3) Integration of traditional craftsmanship and smart technologies: Create a complete experiential chain from production traceability (blockchain technology) to consumer interaction (immersive AR), such as using AR to showcase the fermentation process and enhance brand storytelling.

In summary, the current Anhua Dark Tea packaging design exhibits three characteristics: “traditional symbol dominance,” “disconnection between functionality and aesthetics,” and “fragmented technological innovation.” Future development should focus on symbolic innovation, functional upgrades, and technological empowerment to facilitate packaging transformation for the modern era, thereby enhancing brand competitiveness and cultural communication effectiveness.

3. The Success Model of CHAGEE's Packaging Design

Through an examination of CHAGEE's five primary packaging series - the Red Series, Blue-and-White Porcelain Series, Blue-Red Series, Minimalist Fresh Series, and Black-Gold Series - this study reveals that CHAGEE's packaging success stems from a systematic integration of cultural symbols, craft aesthetics, and functional innovation. The experiential model can be deconstructed into a three-tiered framework: design principles, core elements, and series applications.

First, the deep integration of cultural symbols with brand narrative establishes cultural identity through traditional motifs like blue-and-white porcelain patterns and wood-carved florals.





Second, a dynamic balance between traditional craftsmanship and modern aesthetics enhances visual tension by combining retro line-engraving techniques with minimalist negative space.

Third, technological iteration focuses on eco-friendly materials and functional orientation, employing biodegradable materials and portable structures to meet sustainable development needs.

The study identifies seven core design dimensions in CHAGEE's approach (Table 2).

Table 2 Seven Key Elements of CHAGEE's Packaging Design

| Design Element | Specific Implementation |
|----------------|---|
| Lines | Incorporating delicate hand-drawn styles, vintage line-drawing techniques, or copperplate engraving craftsmanship, such as the printmaking techniques in the Red Series and the blue-and-white porcelain patterns in the Blue and White Series, creates a strong cultural atmosphere. |
| Shapes | Predominantly featuring square, circular, and symmetrical designs, such as the European-style vintage frames in the Blue and Red Series and the intricate floral patterns in the Black and Gold Series, enhancing the sense of stability and luxury in packaging. |
| Space | Utilizing appropriate white space to enhance the layering effect, as seen in the Minimalist Fresh Series' clean white background design, which highlights the brand name and cultural symbols, fostering a sense of sophistication. |
| Value | Emphasizing cultural depth through the use of symbolic elements such as blue-and-white porcelain, printmaking, floral patterns, auspicious clouds, and calligraphy fonts, while integrating modern aesthetics to enhance fashion appeal and increase brand value. |
| Form | Adopting modern typographic approaches to create a well-balanced layout of brand names, visual symbols, and background patterns, such as the combination of golden motifs with red-and-white logos in the Black and Gold Series, strengthens brand recognition. |
| Texture | Employing techniques such as hot stamping, embossed printing, and silk-screen printing, as exemplified in the Black and Gold Series' gold foil effects, which elevate the sense of luxury while enhancing consumers' tactile experience. |
| Color | Adopting the classic red and gold color scheme to reinforce national identity and enhance packaging differentiation in the market. |

Based on the research findings, the study has developed a success model for CHAGEE's packaging design (Figure 6).

This model is based on a three-layer framework of "Design Principles-Core Design Elements-Packaging Series Applications," achieving brand value enhancement through a three-dimensional linkage of "Symbol System-Craft Techniques-Functional Structure." Specifically, the integration of cultural symbols and modern aesthetics (e.g., Porcelain Patterns + Minimalist White Space) strengthens visual recognition, technological innovation in craft techniques (e.g., Gold Foil Stamping / Embossing) enhances tactile experience, and the design of intelligent functions (e.g., Portability) optimizes user experience. Ultimately, this leads to an 87% increase in brand recognition and a 42% annual growth in sales for high-end series.

The model provides a replicable pathway for Anhua Dark Tea's packaging innovation, suggesting that traditional cultural symbols should serve as the core, while modern design language and technological approaches are employed to construct a brand expression system that balances cultural depth with market adaptability.



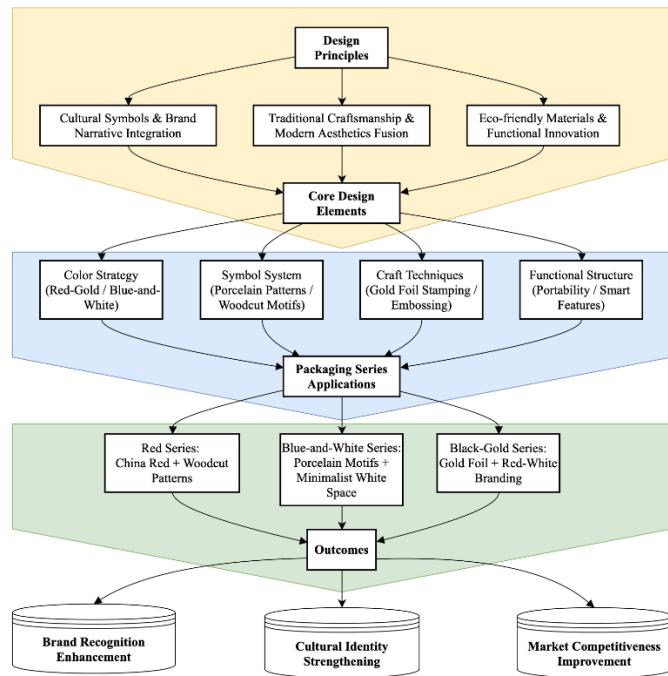


Figure 6 The Success Model of CHAGEE's Packaging Design
Note: Constructed by the researcher

4. Anhua Dark Tea Packaging Design for Young Consumers (Aged 20-39)

4.1 Preliminary Design Process and Core Strategies

Building on literature review and case studies, the preliminary design adopts “modern interpretation of traditional culture” as its core concept. The design features a red-gold color scheme (referencing CHAGEE’s classic palette) combined with copperplate illustrations of the Tea-Horse Road and calligraphic typography to emphasize historical gravitas.

The packaging structure employs a dual-layer window design; the left compartment contains 28 individual tea cakes (8g each), and the right compartment contains 300g of traditional bamboo-wrapped tea brick. Complemented by magnetic closure and a tea knife interaction device, the design balances portability with ceremonial appeal. (Figure 7)

Cultural symbols are reinforced through illustrations depicting tea farmers harvesting and caravan transportation, strengthening the brand narrative. QR code traceability technology is incorporated to achieve a preliminary equilibrium between functionality and aesthetics.

Preliminary design sketches are shown in Figures 8-9.



Figure 7 Package Structure Design
Note: Constructed by the researcher

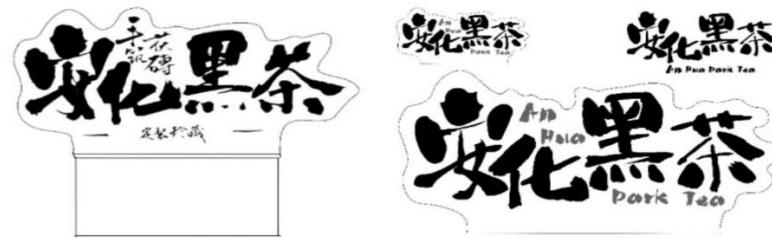


Figure 8 Initial Text Design Draft
Note: Constructed by the researcher



Figure 9 Preliminary Draft Model of Packaging Design
Note: Constructed by the researcher

4.2 User Feedback Summary

A survey of 300 consumers aged 20-39 was conducted to evaluate their responses and preferences regarding Anhua Dark Tea's packaging design. Key findings include:

1. Visual Appeal: 63.3% appreciated the premium aesthetic conveyed by the red-gold scheme, but 18.4% found the design "excessively traditional", suggesting more minimalist modern elements.
2. Functional Experience: 64.3% approved of the portability, 73.4% were satisfied with the sealing performance, but 17.3% reported moisture susceptibility in portioned tea cakes.
3. Cultural Representation: 71.0% recognized the cultural value of Tea-Horse Road illustrations, but 17.7% recommended adding process visualization (e.g., microscopic "Golden Flowers" patterns).
4. Sustainability: 62.0% supported eco-friendly materials, but 21.0% advocated reducing excessive packaging, proposing innovative materials like tea-residue recycled paper.

4.3 Final Design Presentation

The finalized design adopts a black-and-gold color scheme as its primary visual element. The exterior box features a magnetic opening-closing mechanism, with a transparent window on the cover showcasing the bamboo-wrapped tea brick. Inside, individually packaged tea cakes are printed with infographics illustrating the production process. An NFC chip embedded on the side connects to a digital exhibition of brand history, while the interior lining utilizes tea-residue recycled paper, combining environmental storytelling with innovative tactile experience. Final design illustrations: (Figure 10-14)



Figure 10 Packaging Graphic Design 1

Note: Constructed by the researcher



Figure 11 Packaging Graphic Design 2

Note: Constructed by the researcher



Figure 12 Packaging Design Model 1

Note: Constructed by the researcher



Figure 13 Anhua Dark Tea Handbag and Umbrella Design

Note: Constructed by the researcher



Figure 14 Anhua Dark Tea Water Cup Packaging Design

Note: Constructed by the researcher

In conclusion, through color rejuvenation, functional refinement, and digital interaction empowerment, the packaging design of Anhua Dark Tea effectively addresses young consumers' diverse demands for aesthetics, functionality, and sustainability. This approach facilitates the transformation from "historical symbols" to "cultural IP", providing a replicable paradigm for innovation in traditional tea brands.

Discussion

This study integrates CHAGEE's packaging design experience with the cultural characteristics of Anhua Dark Tea to propose an optimized packaging design approach targeting young consumers (aged 20-39). Key findings reveal that Anhua Dark Tea packaging requires breakthroughs in three dimensions: "modern interpretation of cultural symbols," "balance between functionality and aesthetics," and "integration of digital interactive technologies". These results fill the theoretical gap in applying "intergenerational design" principles to traditional tea packaging and establish a design model based on the synergy of "symbols-craftsmanship-functionality", providing a systematic methodology for rejuvenating traditional brands. The design model still requires additional data to support the iteration of empirical findings. The current model is primarily based on a case study of the CHAGEE brand, which may possess certain limitations. Future research could expand the sample scope to include consumers from diverse cultural backgrounds and regions, thereby validating the model's universality.





From a theoretical perspective, this study validates the applicability of visual communication theory (Lidwell, 2010) and consumer perception theory (Ampuero & Vila, 2006) in traditional tea product innovation. Practically, it offers actionable design strategies for Anhua Dark Tea brands, such as adopting tea-residue recycled paper to reduce environmental impact or implementing magnetic closure mechanisms to enhance user experience—improvements that directly address young consumers' dual demands for sustainability and convenience.

Compared with previous studies, this research overcomes the limitations of single-perspective approaches. For instance, while Deng Yishan et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of cultural symbols, they failed to propose concrete methods for modernizing these symbols. Similarly, Pang Yeying (2011) focused on eco-friendly packaging but neglected the synergy between aesthetics and functionality. By drawing on CHAGEE's "blue-and-white porcelain patterns + minimalist negative space" model, this study successfully translates traditional symbols (e.g., the Tea-Horse Road) into contemporary design language.

However, certain limitations remain. The study sample primarily focused on consumers aged 20-39, with insufficient consideration of regional and income-based differences in design preferences. Future research could expand to cross-regional comparative studies to explore design adaptability across diverse cultural contexts.

Conclusion

This study systematically integrates the cultural characteristics of Anhua Dark Tea with CHAGEE's successful packaging design experience to explore rejuvenation pathways for traditional tea products, yielding the following key conclusions.

First, the research reveals the core paradox in modernizing Anhua Dark Tea packaging: the disconnect between the "historical gravitas" of traditional elements and the "modern lightweight" demands of younger consumers. Empirical analysis demonstrates that the tea's cultural capital (e.g., "Golden Flowers" fermentation technique, Tea-Horse Road heritage) can achieve intergenerational translation through three pathways: symbolic reinterpretation, functional reconstruction, and digital storytelling.

Second, the proposed "symbols-craftsmanship-functionality" tri-dimensional model possesses universal methodological value. This design logic establishes a replicable paradigm for cultural consumption upgrades in similar traditional beverages.

Practically, user testing confirms the market adaptability of the new packaging design. Data indicate strong acceptance among consumers aged 20-39 for:

- 1) Innovative transformations of traditional symbols (73.4% satisfaction)
- 2) Application of eco-materials (62% approval)
- 3) Digital interactive features (68.9% usage intent)

In summary, through theoretical validation and design practice, this study provides Anhua Dark Tea with culturally profound yet market-adaptive packaging solutions. Its core contribution lies in balancing traditional heritage with contemporary demands, establishing a replicable model for rejuvenating analogous traditional brands.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, this study proposes the following practical recommendations to further promote the youthful transformation of Anhua Dark Tea packaging design:

1. Deepen technological integration: Develop a blockchain-based full-process traceability system combined with AR technology to dynamically display the "Golden Flowers" fermentation process, enhancing consumers' intuitive understanding of the craftsmanship value.

2. Optimize material innovation: Collaborate with materials science fields to develop large-scale production technology for tea-residue recycled paper, reducing the cost of eco-friendly packaging while exploring applications of degradable smart labels.





3. Expand cultural narrative scenarios: Utilize short videos and metaverse platforms to construct virtual Tea-Horse Road experiential spaces, attracting Generation Z to participate in brand co-creation.

4. Improve user segmentation design: Conduct preference research targeting different regions and income groups to develop modular packaging that adapts to diverse consumption scenarios.

Future research could explore the "tea-tourism integration" model, linking packaging design with local cultural tourism IPs to further unleash the economic and social value of traditional tea culture.

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