



Bring beverage culture for modern urban lifestyle

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ABSTRACT

Tea culture is an important part of traditional Chinese values. With the development of the market economy, the fast-paced lifestyle of modern people, novel things, and information have exerted a continuous impact on people's thoughts and influenced their lifestyle. In recent years, in order to adapt to the consumer market, new types of tea beverages have gradually been developed, while the influence of traditional tea has gradually weakened. This paper mainly takes Pu'er tea as the research subject to explore the current reasons affecting the development of the traditional tea culture. Through the project study, it is expected to find the ways to encourage people to develop an interest in traditional tea, help people to experience the flavor of a cup of tea through the right way, and make people slow down their pace of life to experience the pleasure of drinking tea. Only when people know how to drink tea and enjoy it, and make drinking tea a trend in urban life, can we promote the development of the traditional tea culture. This paper also explores the feasibility of applying the visual culture of ethnic minorities in Pu'er tea producing areas to traditional Pu'er tea packaging. Tea products that incorporate the cultural creativity of ethnic minorities also have a positive impact on the sustainability of the local traditional tea culture and increase consumers' awareness of the tea culture. Allowing the traditional tea culture to gain new developments would require continuous innovation of products that would meet modern aesthetics and pay attention to the user experience. Thus, the sustainable development of traditional tea culture also requires more exploration.

Keywords: Tea culture, Pu'er tea, packaging design, visual design

1. Introduction

Initially, tea was used as a medicine and food. With the development of social civilization, tea has become an important part of traditional Chinese culture. After the material needs were satisfied, people began to pursue spiritual satisfaction and pay more and more attention to the sense of experience. As one of the three major beverages in the world, tea is a recognized healthy drink. Moreover, drinking tea enables people to enjoy a relaxed and stress-reducing lifestyle. The "slow design" concept focuses on experience and emotional exchanges and pays attention to the sustainable development of society, culture, and nature (Strauss & Fuad-Luke, 2008). Drinking tea itself is a "slow life" experience. Affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, people have further realized the importance of the living



environment, and paid more and more attention to the health issue, as well as the sustainable development of urban life. As a kind of purely natural and healthy beverage, traditional tea has attracted more and more attention from the people. However, due to the publicity and guidance of the market, traditional tea has left a stereotype among the young people that it is a kind of profound culture and an expensive consumption behavior, as well as features sophisticated brewing methods. Although meaningful, it is not fashionable enough. As a consequence, this has weakened the enthusiasm of young people for traditional tea drinks and become an obstacle for the popularization of the traditional tea drinking culture.

On the other hand, fast consumption demand has helped tea drinks to be gradually put on the shelves in supermarkets. New types of tea drink shops following the model of coffee shops have been developed on a large scale. People walk into a tea shop with fashionable decorations, get a cup of brewed tea quickly, take a photo of it, and then post it on a social network. Hence, the consumption in a fast-food style has gradually deprived people of the pleasure of brewing tea.

In addition, for young people, the history of the tea culture is too profound and difficult to understand. Therefore, the long-term impact has been that young people have lacked the cognition of traditional tea, thus gradually leading to the discontinuity of the Chinese tea culture. Furthermore, in the trend of economic globalization, what faces huge challenges is the preservation of culture. On the one hand, the impact of globalization puts cultural identity at risk everywhere, and on the other hand, it promotes the formation of new and complex versions of national identity (Jensen et al., 2011).

How to enhance consumers' tea-drinking experience? Faced with the gradual loss of influence of traditional tea culture, there is a need to find effective ways to make people more aware of the traditional tea culture. Using design to sustain the traditional tea culture gains sustainable development.

1.1 A study to improve the tea drinking experiences

Some scholars improve their experience of tea drinking through the design of traditional tea sets. The study of Yang et al. (2019) recognizes the influence of tea sets on the tea drinking experience. The design of the tea set may influence one's perception of the taste and fragrance of tea. Chen(2018)research discusses the methods to improve people's tea drinking ways and enhance their tea drinking experience. By designing portable tea sets, traditional tea can be more suitable for the modern lifestyle. The design and application of tea sets aim to enhance the pleasure of tea drinking by promoting the sensory experience of tea making.

It is worth noticing that the tea set also needs to serve the achievement of tea flavor, which means that a cup of good tea requires a good tea set and correct steeping methods. In this paper, information related to the influence of tea flavor can be explored in order to find ways to improve the sensory experience of drinking tea.



1.2 Packaging designs affect the sensory experience

Krishna et al. (2017) studied about the impact of packaging on the consumer experience. The packaging of a product is a key touch point between the customer and the company, and the sensory aspects of the product and its presentation to the consumer affect the overall customer experience and the interaction between the company and the consumer. Packaging is a key aspect of marketing services, and it has many implications for the overall customer experience. The study introduces a new way of thinking about product packaging by introducing a layered packaging taxonomy that emphasizes the different characteristics and roles of the external-middle-internal physical packaging layer and the purchase consumption functional packaging layer.

Consumer interest in traditional tea products can be enhanced by focusing on enhancing the sensory experience of the packaging.

1.3 Significance of Cultural Innovation Products

Qin et al. (2019) believe that, as some studies show, in the context of modern society, the young generation of China has a low level of awareness of traditional culture. Through empirical research, this paper analyzes young people's purchasing intention and attitudes toward products and verifies the influence of the design of cultural innovation products on young people's perceptions of the sustainability and resilience of TCP. This study finds that the young generation's perception of sustainable development is significantly influenced by the novelty of cultural products, which means that in the context of culturally sustainable development, designs with relatively cultural innovation can be a feasible way to improve young people's perception of traditional culture.

Therefore, it is feasible to apply traditional cultural innovation in the design of tea products to promote the sustainable development of traditional tea culture.

1.4 Regional Culture and Product Design

Shen (2021) finds that the package of local specialties is simple in the form and similar in the design, which failed to effectively adapt to the local cultural elements, consequently, local products have no regional characteristics, reducing consumers' desire to purchase, restricting the sustainable development of regional culture. This research believes that regional culture is an important basis for inheritance and development. Packages with local characterized design are the inheritance of regional culture, and it requires the combination of modern aesthetics to create a visual language with distinctive regional characteristics, profound cultural heritage, unique aesthetic expressions, and strong characteristics of the times, giving the cultural identity to packages of local specialties, and continually innovate and develop new packaging forms.

Tea is a product of regional culture. It is not only a kind of beverage but also represents the local culture. The research on the application of regional culture in the packaging of Pu'er tea can help to increase the cultural identification of tea products.



1.5 Visual Significance of Traditional Culture

Hu et al. (2019) believe that it is of great importance to practitioners of visual communication in China to recognize that the cultural connotation of traditional symbols can effectively convey traditional Chinese visual language in visual communication. This study analyzes the application of Chinese visual language in tea packaging and proposes the method to combine social semiotics and formal visual analysis to understand the cultural significance of traditional symbols from the theoretical perspective and the practice perspective. Traditional symbols are not only a part of the decorative visual language but also have symbolic cultural significance.

Integration of Pu'er tea culture and the culture of local ethnic minorities, and the application of minority cultural symbols in tea packaging can boost the cultural connotation of the tea products and promote the sustainable development of tea culture in the new era.

2. Objectives of the Study

2.1 Through the project research, the local Pu'er tea culture would be explored with the aim of improving the tea drinking experience and pleasure.

2.2 To stimulate young people's interest in traditional tea culture and to promote the sustainable development of traditional tea culture.

2.3 Integrate traditional culture into the design of tea products and enhance the cultural value of traditional tea with cultural innovation.

3. Materials and methods

This paper conducts field research in Pu'er tea producing areas to explore the local cultural values associated with Pu'er tea and combines modern design to find design methods to enhance the experience value of Pu'er tea products. Through new designs, the purpose of improving the influence of traditional Pu'er tea culture is achieved.

3.1 User Research and Analysis

Through a questionnaire, a survey was conducted on the regular issues about tea drinking among the target group (100 respondents aged 18-35 years) in the Xishuangbanna region, Yunnan province, China.

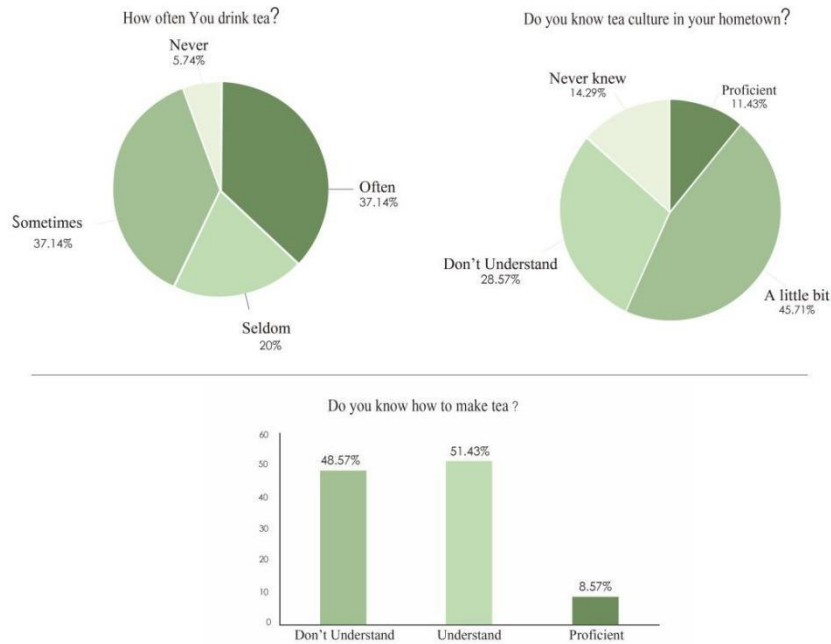


Figure 1 Chart of survey results

Figure 1 shows that only 37.14% of the respondents frequently drank tea. As such, only a small group of people had an in-depth understanding of the local tea culture, and most people did not understand the way of how to brew Pu'er tea. Although living in the production area of Pu'er tea, the local young people did not extensively understand the tea culture. Thus, it could be said that most young people did not know how to drink tea. Due to the absence of the best tea-drinking experience, the stereotype that tea was not tasty was formed.

3.2 Exploration of the Raw Materials of Tea and the Process

Traditional Chinese tea can be divided into six categories according to the process: green tea, black tea, white tea, oolong tea, yellow tea, and dark tea. They are distinguished based on the differences of the tea-producing process and by the fermentation degree of the tea leaves. The fermentation degree also influences the taste and effect of tea. Taking the Forest Pu'er Tea from the production area of Xishuangbanna, as an example, the tea trees were planted in the mountainous region mainly by the local ethnic minorities, who had been planting tea trees for at least 1,000 years in the Mekong River Basin (Zhen, 2016). The Forest Pu'er Tea is one of the most expensive varieties of Pu'er tea. Its special feature is the longer the storage time, the higher the value. The raw materials for producing Forest Pu'er Tea are the leaves of large-leaf tea trees, which grow in high-altitude forests (Figure 2). In the tea forest, some tea trees have lived for at least 100 years. When the field research was conducted on Laobanzhang, the No. 1 village of Pu'er Tea (Figure 3), it was the right time of the year to collect the spring tea. Tea merchants and tourists have always come to this mountainous village in an endless stream. The tea leaves in spring are regarded as



the most valuable raw leaves for producing tea. The tea produced from these new leaves boasts a richer taste with the accumulation of nutrients across the entire winter.



Figure 2 Tea trees planted in the forest



Figure 3 Laobanzhang, the No.1 village of Pu'er tea

The scarcity of old tea trees and their unique regional nature makes it a kind of expensive tea and luxury product. However, within the production area of Pu'er tea, there are small and large tea trees with similar tasting and drinking values. Their growth environment is the same as that of the old tea trees; however, they are planted less than 100 years. Compared to the Pu'er tea produced from the leaves of old tea trees, though there are differences in terms of flavor, the output is much larger than the old tea trees, and the price is more suitable for common consumers in daily use.

The taste of Pu'er tea is influenced by the soil, water quality, and neighboring environment, which forms Pu'er tea's characteristics of "one mountain, one flavor", leading to the concise division of Pu'er tea products. Most of the Forest Pu'er Tea at the market is named after the places of production; for example, Laobanzhang the above-mentioned village and the Pu'er tea produced in the local tea-producing area is named after Laobanzhang.

Veteran enthusiasts of Pu'er tea can even distinguish the places of production of tea from just drinking it. This connection is special. Through tea, people's taste buds perceive different regions, so various aromas of tea are a kind of recording method of their growth environment. People living in cities can also perceive the growth environment of tea trees through drinking tea. Hence, human beings and nature are connected by the taste of a tea leaf.

In addition, Pu'er tea is divided into two categories according to the fermentation methods: raw tea and ripe tea. The raw tea is produced by natural fermentation, which can be 10-20 years in age, whereas ripe tea is artificially fermented. Furthermore, the fermentation of tea is accelerated through techniques, and the transformation of tea is completed within a short time. However, for the raw tea, the fermentation requires a long process. The Pu'er tea produced through the two fermentation methods are also totally different in flavor. Fermentation is a natural



balance; consequently, during this process, the microbial community absorbs the nutrients of the tea leaves and simultaneously transforms the matter in the tea leaves to form new matter, thus giving Pu'er tea rich and diverse tastes. The fermentation degree determines the color of the tea soup. As a result, the continuously changing Pu'er tea is designed by nature, as it continues to evolve over time to prove the changes and traces of life.

The transformation process of tea leaves takes a long time. Additionally, the packaging and storage of Pu'er tea are factors influencing the fermentation of the tea leaves, while the fermentation determines the taste of the tea. Even the same tea can develop different tastes if stored in different places.

3.3 Exploration of Tea-drinking Methods

In recent years, people have begun to pay attention to the portability of tea sets, hence making them easier to use, so as to make brewing tea more acceptable to young people. However, besides the portability of tea sets, the function of tea sets cannot be neglected. For example, the right tea set can better present the taste of the tea leaves. It was recorded in the ancient Chinese work 'Classic of Tea' that different tea sets were needed to brew different tea leaves, so to obtain a better taste of tea. It was found through experiments and studies that putting the same tea in different teacups could influence the feelings of the users about the entire presentation of tea (Yang et al., 2019). Pu'er tea is usually brewed with lidded cups to facilitate the control of the concentration of the tea. Additionally, the tea sets produced with high-temperature ceramics are conducive to reserving the aroma of tea, which is convenient for people to smell the aroma. As a kind of post-fermented tea, Pu'er tea has its own unique brewing method. The first extraction of Pu'er tea cannot be consumed, especially the old raw tea that needs to be washed with hot water at 100°C. The brewing time also needs to be controlled. Moreover, excessive brewing of tea leaves would lead to bitterness in the taste of the tea. Hence, pouring water directly onto the tea leaves must be avoided to reduce the astringent taste of the tea. Therefore, even if owning a suitable tea set, if a person does not brew tea in the right way, they would not get a cup of tasty tea. Thus, the only way to get a better flavor of tea and improve the tea-drinking experience is to let people know the proper way to brew tea.

3.4 Concept and Solutions

3.4.1 "Flavor" and regional culture of Pu'er tea

Through the exploration of the local Pu'er tea culture, every aspect related to Pu'er tea involves one theme: the "flavor" of Pu'er tea (Figure 4). The taste, smell, and somatic sensation are key factors in drinking Pu'er tea. The most important sensory characteristics of Pu'er tea lie in its sweetness after the taste, aroma, temperament, and appeal (Ma, 2018). In the process of drinking tea, this kind of sweet flavor after the bitterness triggers philosophical thinking on life from the taste of tea. "After the bitter comes the sweet" interprets the experience brought by the flavor of Pu'er tea. When people taste food, besides the smell and taste, sensory stimuli, such as vision, hearing, and touch, are all conducive to the construction of the "flavor system" (Yang et al., 2019). In addition to



food itself, perception affects the appeal of the food. Therefore, by drinking tea, people may perceive the natural environment in which tea grows. As such, “flavor” endows Pu-er tea with unique regional characteristics.

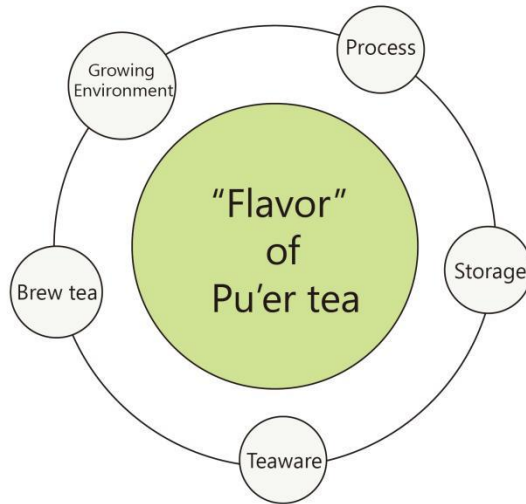


Figure 4 Factors affecting the flavor of Pu'er tea

Some people would take the example by linking Pu'er tea and French wines together. The same thing is that they all have unique regional natures and unique local customs.

In France, in order to help people, particularly young consumers, to improve the ability of evaluating and appreciating food, especially unique French food, it needs to teach them how to taste and cultivate their ability of identification. Through conducting tasting events, this “provides clear information and education”, and lets people know the sources of food, the production methods, and quality of the food (Trubek, 2008). In this way, the influence of local culture is expanded, and the French people may develop a more acute appreciation ability of food. Similarly, the evaluation and appreciation of Pu'er tea can also be enhanced by displaying its unique culture.

3.4.2 Application of illustrations and infographics

To improve the tea-drinking experience, infographic design is one of the potential solutions. Through the display of “flavor”, people can become familiar with Pu'er tea more easily and quickly. The displayed content would include the origin of tea, the types of tea trees, the process of tea production, the tea brewing method, and the tea tasting method (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Infographic visualization of the Pu-er tea journey

3.4.3 Tea packaging with regional characteristics

In the Xishuangbanna Pu'er tea producing area, Forest Pu'er tea is mainly planted by ethnic minorities. Taking Nannuo Mountain and Youle Mountain as examples, the Hani people mainly live in the villages on Nannuo Mountain, while the Jino people mainly inhabit Youle Mountain. Like the regional culture of Pu'er tea, the culture of the ethnic minorities also bears unique regional characteristics. Each ethnic minority has its own language, clothing, religion, and culture. According to Qin et al. (2019), a culturally innovative design can enhance the younger generation's awareness of traditional culture and produce a positive effect on cultural sustainability. Thus, the culture of the ethnic minorities in the origin of Pu'er tea can be integrated into the Pu'er tea packaging for innovation.

4. Results

4.1 Cultural Innovation of the Pu'er Tea Packaging Design Process

Focus on cultural innovation in the process of pu'er tea packaging design. Combined with the minority folk cultures of the two Pu'er tea producing areas, Nannuo Mountain and Youle Mountain, a Pu'er tea package would be designed to present the cultural characteristics of the tea's origin.

4.2 Inspiration for the Packaging Structure

During the research, the authors found that a triangular roof was used on the traditional buildings of the local ethnic minorities, and mountains were usually expressed using triangular symbols. Inspired by the architecture of the ethnic minorities and the shape of the tea mountains, the authors sketched the tea box (Figure 6).



White cardboard was used to make the prototype of the tea box. The upper part of the box was made into a triangle, and the lower part was made into a square presenting a combination of a mountain and house (Figure 7).

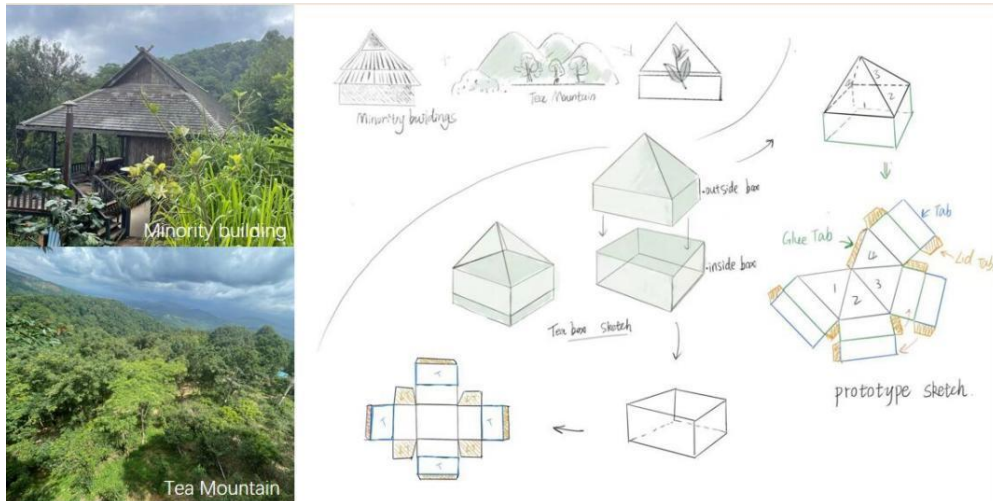


Figure 6 Inspiration and sketch of the tea box

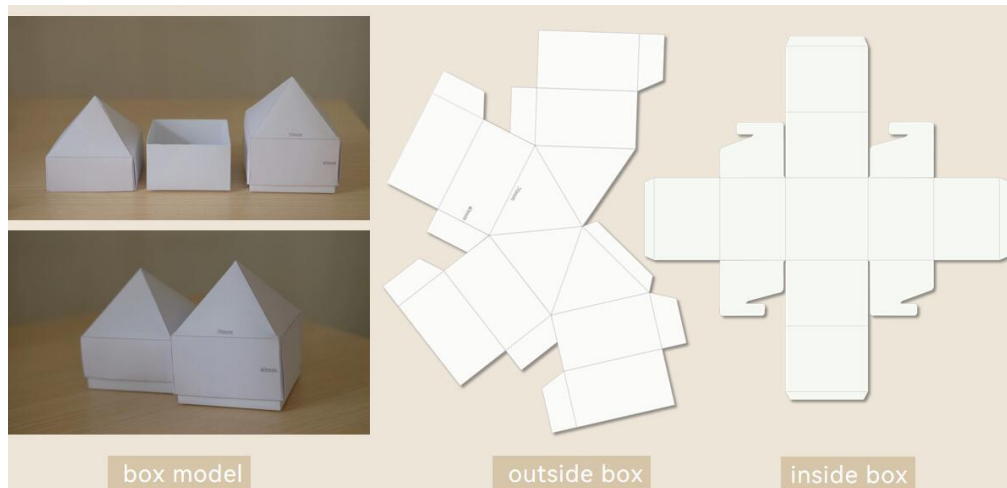


Figure 7 Structural diagram and model of the tea box

4.3 Pattern Design

4.3.1 Basic patterns

Inspired by the patterns and colors on the traditional costumes of the Hani and Jino peoples, the authors sketched the basic patterns.

In the traditional patterns of the local ethnic minorities, a large number of geometric symbols and rich vivid colors were used to make up the unique ethnic patterns. The Hani people dressed in black, blue, and red as the main hues (Figure 8), while the Jino people dressed in white, blue, and red as the main hues (Figure 9).



Figure 8 The Hani's traditional clothing and patterns, and the basic design



Figure 9 The Jino's traditional clothing and patterns, and the basic design

4.3.2 Pattern design of regional culture

Inspired by the shape of the local tea mountains and the traditional architectural structure of the ethnic minorities, the authors used basic patterns to combine the mountains and architecture, so to make the patterns promote the unique local folk culture. In this way, different tea producing areas could be distinguished from the patterns (Figures 10-11).

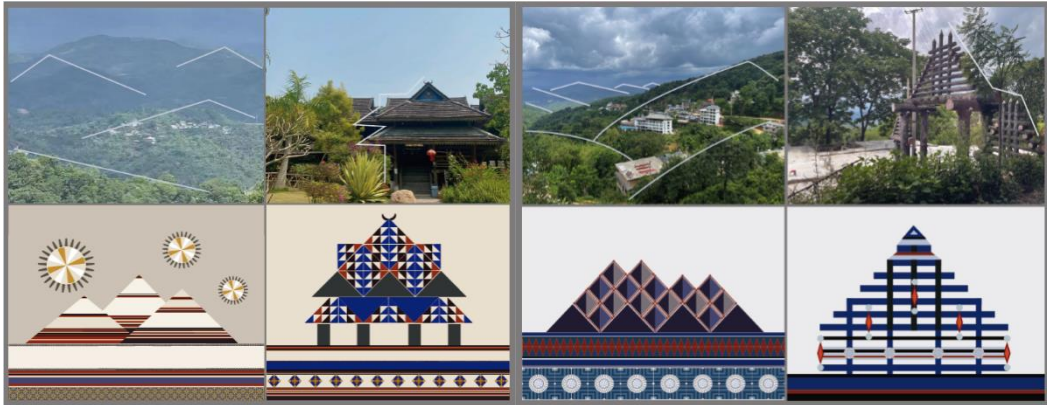


Figure 10 Pattern design of the Jino style

Figure 11 Pattern design of the Hani style

4.3.3 Application of patterns on the teabag

Teabags are an internal component of a tea box. Each teabag would carry 8 g of tea tablets, which would be convenient to carry and use. The structure of the teabag would be divided into two parts (Figure 12). The outer part would be added to the three-dimensional structure of the cardholder. The pattern on these cardholders would stand up to give a more interesting form visually (Figure 13). The interior would be wrapped with cotton paper to protect the fermentation environment and facilitate the tea storage.



Figure 12 Structure of the teabag

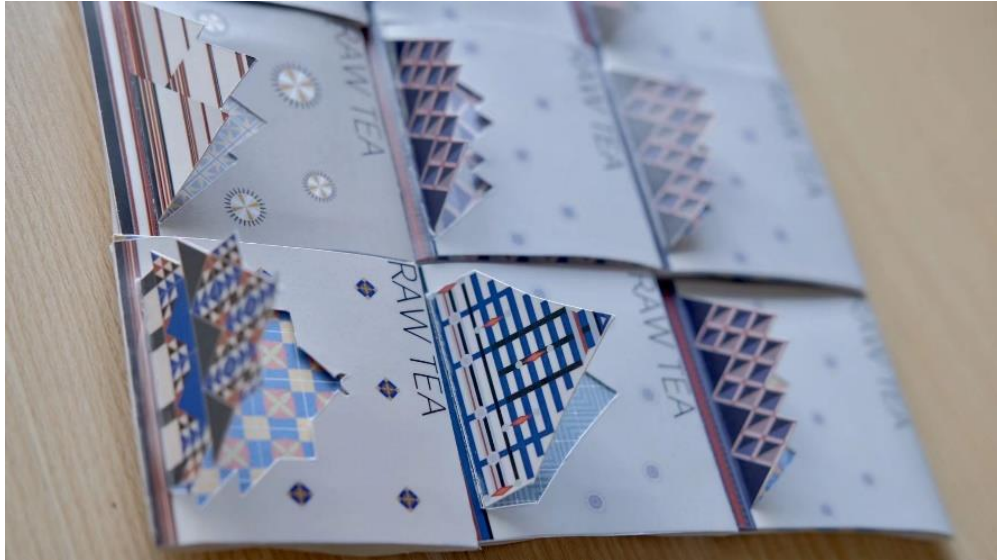


Figure 13 Physical effect of the teabag

4.3.4 Application of the pattern on the tea box

The tea box would consist of the upper and lower parts. As the visual body, the pattern would be mainly applied to the triangular structure of the upper part (Figure 14).

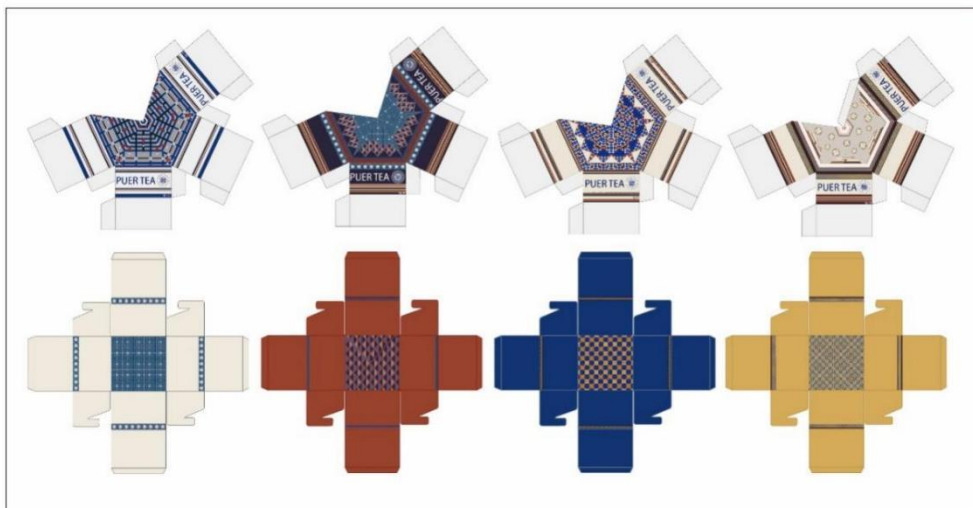


Figure 14 Structure of the upper and lower parts of the tea box

4.3.5 Final product display

The structure of the tea box was exquisitely explored, so to enhance the fun and interactivity of the tea packaging. Through the use of colors, symbols, and graphics, the authors incorporated the characteristics of



the local ethnic minorities and distinguished the teas of the different ethnic groups and regions. Therefore, the regional ethnic culture of the origin of Pu'er tea would be reflected in a more intuitive manner.



Figure 15 Final product

5. Conclusion

In order to better integrate traditional tea drinking culture into modern life, this paper discusses the factors that influence the flavor of Pu'er tea and explore ways to improve the tea drinking experience through design. The cultural value as well as the recognition of tea products can be enhanced by designing packaging with cultural elements of local characteristics.

Currently, this would only increase the pleasure in the process of drinking tea to attract more young consumers to experience traditional tea drinks through the packaging design. Moreover, this would only improve this problem from one single perspective. To make young people more interested in the traditional tea culture of China is a direction that would need continuous exploration and more joint attention and research by the stakeholders, so to continuously improve the visual effect, function, and users' experience of the product and make it a fashionable lifestyle to drink tea. To make the younger generation better understand tea culture is conducive to the inheritance and development of the traditional tea culture.

It is recommended to continue exploring the integration of regional culture into the design of tea products, combining traditional culture with modern design to improve the cultural connotation of tea packaging and achieve the goal of promoting sustainable development of traditional tea culture.



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