

Exploring the Integration of New Media in Design Education

-- A case study on tea packaging design

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Abstract: Packaging design plays a crucial role in product marketing. It enhances the visual appeal of a product and significantly influences consumer purchasing behavior. Therefore, it deserves adequate attention in design-related curricula. As a traditional Chinese beverage with deep cultural significance, tea has gained increasing global popularity. However, with the proliferation of tea brands and varieties, standing out in the competitive marketplace has become a critical issue. Meanwhile, the rise of new media technologies has reshaped contemporary teaching practices. Effectively incorporating these technologies to stimulate students' creativity is an urgent concern for educators. This paper explores how new media can be integrated into design education, particularly in tea packaging courses, to foster cultural understanding, visual communication skills, and innovative thinking.

Keywords: New Media, Teaching, Tea Packaging Design, Innovation, Visual Culture, Interdisciplinary Education.

1. Introduction

With the development of digital technology and the proliferation of the Internet, new media has emerged as a transformative force in education. New media refers to digital content delivered through Internet platforms, social media, virtual reality, and mobile apps. Its immediacy, interactivity, and multimedia integration offer unique advantages for pedagogy, particularly in design education, where visual and experiential learning are crucial. In contrast to traditional lecture-based models, new media fosters student participation, encourages self-directed exploration, and facilitates real-time collaboration.

In the context of tea packaging design, the intersection between traditional cultural narratives and modern visual strategies presents a rich field for educational innovation. Chinese tea culture, with its deep historical roots and symbolic meanings, offers abundant materials for design exploration. However, traditional methods of instruction often fail to engage students in deeply contextualized, practical, and innovative work. By integrating new media tools—such as digital illustration, animation, 3D modeling, and augmented reality—teachers can enhance the learning experience and cultivate students' abilities to develop culturally resonant and commercially viable packaging solutions.

This paper uses tea packaging design as a case study to examine how new media integration can support design education reform. It discusses the pedagogical rationale, teaching strategies, and expected outcomes, offering actionable insights for curriculum development.

2. Discussion

2.1. The Connotation and Practical Demand of Tea Packaging Design

Tea packaging design operates at the intersection of culture and commerce. On one hand, it embodies the symbolic

richness of Chinese tea culture; on the other hand, it must respond to modern marketing logic. In educational settings, teaching should emphasize both dimensions. Students must be equipped to translate cultural elements into visual language while ensuring the functionality and market appeal of their designs.

2.1.1. Cultural Embodiment and Market Orientation

Chinese tea culture includes rituals, regional traditions, and aesthetic principles that have evolved over millennia. Packaging is an extension of this cultural system. For instance, the use of calligraphy, traditional patterns, and poetic imagery on packaging evokes a sense of nostalgia and authenticity. At the same time, modern markets demand differentiation and clarity in branding. Educators should guide students to analyze cultural symbols and understand consumer psychology, helping them create packaging that balances heritage with innovation.

2.1.2. Functional and Environmental Considerations

Effective packaging design also requires consideration of material properties and functional needs. Tea, being sensitive to moisture, light, and aroma dissipation, demands specialized packaging solutions. Common materials include metal tins for airtight storage, laminated paper for affordability, and bamboo for sustainability. Educators must introduce students to various material technologies and sustainability concepts. Practical exercises can include comparative studies of materials, user testing, and redesign based on ecological impact.

2.1.3. Regional Design Case Analysis

By analyzing regional packaging examples—such as the intricate bamboo wraps of Pu'er tea in Yunnan or the red-and-gold foil tins of Fujian's Tieguanyin—students can observe how local aesthetics shape product identity. This encourages awareness of design diversity and cultivates respect for regional storytelling within global branding contexts.

2.2. Diverse Packaging Forms and Cultural Expression

Tea packaging is a dynamic field that continues to evolve. Designers now integrate cultural storytelling with contemporary aesthetics and emerging technologies. This evolution should be reflected in design education through both theory and practice.

2.2.1. Evolution of Packaging Styles

Traditional tea packaging focused on preservation and cultural symbolism. Modern trends emphasize portability, personalization, and environmental friendliness. Students should study historical packaging formats and analyze the evolution in relation to social and technological change. Comparative studies of international packaging—like the minimalist aesthetics of Japanese matcha packaging or the luxury-focused approach of Western herbal teas—can broaden students' global vision.

2.2.2. Visual Storytelling and Regional Identity

Design education should emphasize the transformation of local legends, customs, and traditional art forms into visual narratives. For example, incorporating Minnan architecture, maritime motifs, or ink-wash landscapes into packaging for Fujian teas helps create a distinct regional identity. Assignments may include field research, mood board creation, and storytelling-based design tasks to enhance students' narrative capabilities.

2.2.3. Symbolic Abstraction and Graphic Language

Instructors can introduce abstraction techniques to modernize traditional visuals. Elements like cloud patterns, dragon motifs, and floral symbols can be reinterpreted through stylized graphics and digital illustration tools. Students may also learn how to develop modular design systems, allowing for consistent visual language across packaging series.

2.3. Visual System Development in Packaging Design Education

A cohesive visual system is critical in brand communication. It encompasses color schemes, typography, iconography, and layout structures that form a unified brand identity.

2.3.1. Cultural Innovation in Graphic Language

Graphic design should go beyond decorative collage by merging cultural interpretation and creative thinking. Students should be encouraged to modernize traditional elements such as landscape paintings, totems, and floral imagery through abstraction and stylization. Educators can also introduce techniques such as illustration, dyeing, and printmaking to enrich visual expression and strengthen brand identity.

2.3.2. Typography and Brand Tone

Typography shapes the personality of a product. Serif fonts like Song or Times Roman convey tradition and authority; handwritten styles suggest creativity and approachability. In design education, students can engage in exercises that involve customizing typefaces, experimenting with font pairings, and testing readability in print and digital formats.

2.3.3. Color Psychology and Consumer Perception

Color choices must align with product type and emotional tone. Warm colors like red and gold are associated with black and oolong teas, suggesting warmth and richness. Green and white tones are used for green and white teas to imply

freshness and purity. Educators should introduce principles of color theory, cultural connotations, and consumer psychology. Digital tools like Adobe Color and AI-driven palette generators can support exploration.

2.3.4. Integrated Visual Identity Systems

Students should be trained to create comprehensive brand guidelines, including logo application, color standards, type hierarchies, and packaging mockups. Group projects can simulate real-world branding tasks where each team develops a packaging system for a specific tea brand, applying consistency across boxes, bags, labels, and promotional materials.

2.4. Practical Value of New Media in Design Teaching

New media enhances educational delivery and broadens creative possibilities. In design education, it enables students to visualize, simulate, and present ideas more dynamically.

2.4.1. AR/VR and Interactive Demonstration

Augmented reality allows users to scan packaging and access virtual information about tea origins, brewing techniques, and cultural context. VR platforms enable students to simulate unboxing experiences and test design usability. Teachers can incorporate tools like Unity, Blender, or Spark AR into coursework to create immersive learning environments.

2.4.2. Interdisciplinary Content Integration

Design education should transcend disciplinary boundaries, combining new media with humanities, material science, and consumer psychology. Tools like 3D modeling software, AI-powered design platforms, and online collaboration suites can foster holistic skillsets and systemic thinking. Instructors should also encourage cross-disciplinary teamwork and problem-solving, preparing students for real-world challenges and innovation-driven environments.

2.4.3. Open and Innovative Assessment Mechanisms

New media not only transforms how knowledge is delivered but also redefines assessment. Instructors can utilize online platforms, social media feedback, and public voting to evaluate student projects based on real-world impact. Project-based learning should be emphasized, with team-based packaging assignments cultivating collaboration and execution skills. Multi-dimensional assessment models incorporating creativity, logic, implementation, and presentation foster comprehensive talent development.

2.4.4. AI Tools and Digital Prototyping

Generative AI, such as Midjourney or DALL·E, accelerates idea generation and visual experimentation. Design software like Figma and Adobe XD allows rapid prototyping and real-time feedback. These tools help students iterate faster and refine their designs with higher efficiency and precision.

2.4.5. Flipped Classrooms and Project-Based Assessment

New media supports flipped classroom models, where students study foundational knowledge via videos or online materials and use class time for critique and collaboration. Assessment can include peer reviews, social media engagement, and public exhibitions. This model cultivates communication, teamwork, and adaptability—core competencies in modern design careers.

3. Conclusion

Tea packaging design, situated at the crossroads of culture,

aesthetics, and technology, offers a fertile domain for educational innovation. New media tools empower educators to create more engaging, interdisciplinary, and practice-oriented learning environments. By integrating cultural understanding with modern techniques, students develop the skills and sensibilities needed for global design challenges. Future teaching practices should prioritize experiential learning, cross-cultural awareness, and continuous technological adaptation to foster a new generation of designers equipped for both tradition and transformation.

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