

Research on the Package Design for Characteristic Agricultural Products in Rural Tourism Destinations of Ya'an

Jie He

Sichuan Agricultural University, Ya'an, Sichuan Province, China

Keywords: regional culture; rural tourism; package design.

Abstract: The rapid economic development and the dramatic improvement of living standards have accelerated the development of tourism industry. For citizens, tourism has gradually become the main way of leisure in holidays. Rural tourism, as a new and rapidly developing tourism mode, is becoming particularly noticeable. As an indispensable part of the rural tourism industry, the selling of characteristic agricultural products plays an important role in promoting the branding of rural tourism and achieving the sustainable development. This paper analyzes the current situation of the package design for characteristic agricultural products in rural tourism destinations of Ya'an, and extracts relevant arguments, so as to enrich the humanistic implications of rural tourism, and promote the high-quality and brand-based development of rural tourism.

1. Introduction

The rapid economic development and the dramatic improvement of living standards have accelerated the development of tourism industry. For citizens, tourism has gradually become the main way of leisure in holidays. Rural tourism, as a new and rapidly developing tourism mode, is particularly noticeable. Statistics from the Ministry of Tourism show that in 2014, rural tourism revenue increased by 40 billion yuan; 200,000 new jobs were created in this industry, bringing benefits to more than 33 million farmers. On May 25, 2015, the General Secretary Xi "liked" the farm tourism in Zhoushan, which greatly stimulated the high quality and fast development of the rural tourism industry in China.

This paper carries out research on the packaging design for agricultural products based on features of rural tourism destinations in Ya'an. The research can not only promote the further development of the rural tourism industry, but also play an important role in promoting the economic and social development of the region. At the same time, good packaging design can greatly enhance the added value of characteristic agricultural products and increase farmers' income to a large extent. It is of great practical significance and far-reaching historical significance to accelerate the pace of our socialist modernization construction, narrow the gap between the rich and poor, and strengthen national unity. Now the CPC Central Committee and the State Council attach great importance to the development of rural tourism. It is necessary for us to grasp the opportunity, try to achieve targeted poverty alleviation through design and promote rural revitalization.

2. The Current Situation of Rural Tourism in Ya'an

In 2012, the General Office of the People's Government of Sichuan Province published the Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Leisure Agriculture and Rural Tourism (No. 64 Document of the Government of Sichuan [2012]). The policy expresses that, "Sichuan is the birthplace of China's farm tourism. Leisure agriculture and rural tourism industry in our province continue to develop and become increasingly strong in these 3 decades. The industry modes become diversified; the development method is changed; the efficiency is increasing. Now the industry plays an important role in increasing peasants' income, transforming the traditional agriculture, constructing rural areas and promoting the development of urban and rural areas as a whole." According to the Statistics of Sichuan Tourism: Third Quarter Report 2018 issued by the Sichuan Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, rural tourism reception in Sichuan Province

increased by 50.41% year-on-year; the number of tourists reached 66.65 million people. Among them, 43.2 million tourists came from Sichuan, accounting for 64.82%; 23.45 million tourists came from other provinces, accounting for 35.18%.

At present, relevant departments of Ya'an are vigorously promoting the development of rural tourism. They compiled the Ya'an Rural Tourism Promotion Plan (2018-2020) to vigorously implementing the strategies of enriching the people, achieving the rural revitalization and realizing poverty alleviation through rural tourism. According to the development strategy of "combining agriculture with tourism, integrating production with villages, and linking the primary industry with the second and third industries", rural tourism in Ya'an starts from the construction of modern agricultural parks, rural tourism scenic spots and new rural communities, seizes the new development opportunity of "agricultural plus tourism", centers on the six basic elements of "eating, living, traveling, sightseeing, purchasing and entertainment", and makes efforts to form the new pattern of agriculture and tourism featured by "elegant scenery and safe travel". Leisure agriculture and rural tourism achieve leapfrog development and become a new development engine of rural economy. Now in Sichuan, there are 3 national-level model villages of rural tourism, 4 national-level model households of rural tourism, 20 national-level leaders of rural tourism, 5 provincial-level towns with characteristics of rural tourism, 18 provincial-level model villages of rural tourism, and 4 excellent villages of rural tourism at provincial level.^[1]

In recent years, Ya'an has taken the opportunity of building happy and beautiful new villages. The city focuses on the development of Yacha (tea industry in Ya'an), Yazhu (bamboo industry in Ya'an), Yaguo (fruit industry in Ya'an), Yayao (medical industry in Ya'an), Yayu (fishing industry in Ya'an) and other characteristic industries. According to statistics, Ya'an has built three eco-industrial cultural tourism economic corridors, including the ecological tea industry, the fruit and vegetable industry, as well as the fruit and medicine industry. The area of the characteristic industrial base dominated by "five Ya industries" has reached 4.65 million mu. The industrial development pattern of "one park in one county, one main industry in one park, and one feature for one corridor" has basically taken shape. Nowadays, four rural tourism areas have formed in Ya'an, including "ink and wash Shangli and Western Sichuan folk culture featured area" with Shangli town as the core, the "tea culture characteristic area" with Mengding Mountain as the core, the "Tibetan local customs featured area" with Baoxing Qiaoqi minority culture as the core, as well as the "flower and fruit characteristic area" with the idyllic scenery in Jiuxiang area of Hanyuan County as the core.

3. Problems in Package Design for Characteristic Agricultural Products in Ya'an

As an indispensable part of the rural tourism industry, the selling of characteristic agricultural products plays an important role in promoting the branding of rural tourism industry and achieving the sustainable development. Package is an important carrier in product distribution, brand shaping the image promotion. It is an important link between production and distribution; it also plays a key role in consumers' evaluation, consumption experiences and purchase decisions.

At present, the development of rural tourism in Ya'an is in full swing. The selling of characteristic agricultural products has promoted the development of the countryside and brought wealth to farmers. But there are still many problems in the packaging design for characteristic agricultural products, which restrict the further development of local rural tourism. Specific issues are as follows.

3.1 Weak design consciousness

The development of rural tourism in Ya'an area is still in its initial stage. On one hand, government departments do not have sufficient understanding on designing. They pay little attention to the significance of regional and cultural features in the package design for characteristic agricultural products in rural tourism destinations, and fail to play the role of propaganda and guidance. On the other hand, operators do not have strong awareness on designing packages for characteristic agricultural products. The packages in this region can only satisfy functional needs;

they cannot meet consumers' aesthetic pursuits of at the visual and cultural levels. The added value of products are not greatly improved.

3.2 Unremarkable regional cultural features

At present, due to the geographical locations, the business philosophy, the industry scale, as well as the cost and other factors, most product packages in rural tourism destinations of Ya'an have "no design". Considering the factor of cost, many operators choose printing plants which provide free "design" services. The product package lacks individuality, and cannot fully display product characteristics, or regional and cultural symbols. Many agricultural products in different regions, produced by different nationalities and with different cultural backgrounds have the same package. The phenomenon not only affects the sales, but also damages the overall image of rural tourism in Ya'an to a certain extent. For example, the packages for Mengding Mountain Tea in Ya'an are basically the same as those products of other provinces and municipalities. On the package, the color of Mengding Mountain Tea is mainly green; graphics are mainly pictures of the producing area or images of the product. There is no presentation of regional or cultural characteristics, nor can it show the pride in Ju-yi Bai's poem, "tea grows on the Mengding mountain is like waters in the Yangtze River".

3.3 Single packaging material

At present in Ya'an, packages for special agricultural products do not have ordered materials or innovative forms; packaging materials can not fully reflect product features and cultural backgrounds. Plastic and paper are the main package materials. Designers focus on the portability of packages, but ignore that packages are important carriers for promoting the brand image of local rural tourism. For example, corrugated paperboard and cardboard are selected to pack different kinds of fruit in Jiuxiang area of Hanyuan County. The packages can meet the needs of storage, transportation and portability, but there are some deficiencies in the expression of product personality and regional cultural characteristics.

3.4 Lack of interactive and experiential design

Besides the satisfaction of the basic functions of products, the new generation of consumers nowadays, mainly the post-90s generation, also pays attention to the interactive experience when they use the products. Through the structure, material and visual design, we can realize the interaction between products and packages, the interaction between packages and consumers, as well as the interaction between products and consumers, and enhance the interest and experience of consumers during the use process. This kind of experience plays an important role in their purchase decisions. The package design for characteristic agricultural products in Ya'an area is still in the initial stage in terms of interaction and experience.

4. Suggestions on Package Design for Characteristic Agricultural Products in Rural Tourism Destinations of Ya'an

After in-depth analysis and research on problems existing in the packaging design for characteristic agricultural products in rural tourism destinations of Ya'an, following suggestions are put forward for the industry of packaging design for characteristic agricultural products in Ya'an based on the current situation of rural tourism development and the background of consumption upgrading.

4.1 Strengthening design consciousness

The packaging design for characteristic agricultural products is of great significance not only for promoting the development of rural tourism industry, but also for promoting the economic and social development of this region. According to McKinsey China Consumer Survey 2007: "Double-click" Chinese Consumers, the "post-90s" will be the new generation of consuming subject. The "post-90s" consumers account for 16 percent of China's total population. From now on

to 2030, they will contribute more than 20 percent of China's total consumption growth, which is higher than the contribution of any other groups. They have distinct personalities...These consumers' independent consciousness has been significantly enhanced. Young customers have more health demands, more mature brand awareness, as well as higher requirements for products and services they purchased.^[2] Therefore, government departments and operators must emancipate their minds and realize the important role of package design for agricultural products. On one hand, relevant departments of Ya'an Municipal Government must strengthen propaganda, actively guide operators to understand the social situation and consumers' needs, in order to enhance the market competitiveness of local rural tourism, increase products' added values, and increase farmers' income. On the other hand, managers must improve themselves, pay close attention to the new consumption needs of different consumer groups under the background of consumption upgrading, and strengthen designing awareness as well as branding consciousness.

4.2 Clarifying the design orientation

The starting point of packaging design should be the regional and cultural features of the product as well as its target consumer groups. Therefore, design positioning should be determined according to the product, the regional culture and the consumer group. Through this method, packages can highlight the personality, enhance the taste and cultural connotation of agricultural products, and increase the added value; they can also meet the needs of different consumer groups and ensure that the packages can meet the aesthetic and consumption demands of consumers for packaging.

4.3 Taking root in regional culture

Ya'an is adjacent to Chengdu in the east, Ganzi in the west, Liangshan in the South and Aba in the north. It is known as the "throat of Western Sichuan", the "gateway of Tibet" and the "national corridor". Ya'an has 39 ethnic minorities, including Yi and Tibetan nationalities. Minorities account for 5.4 percent of the total population.^[3] Therefore, the packaging design for characteristic agricultural products in rural tourism destinations of Ya'an should take root in regional culture, strengthen product features, highlight cultural connotations and promote the sale of agricultural products. In terms of visual design, we can choose representative graphics and colors according to the region, and take the nationality, culture and belief as the breakthrough point, so as to add cultural connotation and national personality to the packages of agricultural products. Taking the packaging design of Ya'an Tibetan tea as an example, graphics can be used include the "auspicious knot", the "ten-phase comfort pattern" as well as "eight auspicious pictures" with Tibetan cultural characteristics. Colors can be white, blue, red, yellow and green, which are most commonly used and respected by Tibetans. According to the specific needs of product packaging design, graphics and colors can be selected and re-designed. Through these measures, packages of Ya'an Tibetan tea can not only reflect regional cultures and national characteristics, but also bring new visual experiences to consumers and guide them to buy the product. The packaging structure can be combined with shapes with regional characteristics to form visual exclusiveness, enhance the individuality of packages and highlight regional as well as cultural characteristics.

4.4 Enriching packaging materials

In the Book of Diverse Crafts, a saying goes that, "the climate is restricted by seasons; the land is restricted by the climate; artisans can be skillful or clumsy; materials can be good or bad". The "good material" refers to the natural beauty of materials. According to regional differences and different natural conditions, traditional packaging materials in this region can be applied to special agricultural products. It is of great significance to highlight the characteristics of rural tourism as well as the regional and cultural features of agricultural products. Ya'an has abundant natural resources. We can choose wood, bamboo, grass or bamboo shoot shells to pack characteristic agricultural products and break the existing pattern of dominated plastic packages. The natural materials can not only represent the clean, natural, and high quality agricultural products in Ya'an, but also implement the concept of green packaging design.

4.5 Enhancing interactive experience

The ultimate purpose of packaging design is to promote sales and increase profits. The package of products should have a certain degree of interaction, in order to enhance consumers' interests and ceremonial sense during the usage of products. The packaging of characteristic agricultural products in rural tourism destinations is not only a kind of structure, but also a combination of collective experiences, interaction and exchanges. Taking the packaging design of Mengding Mountain Tea in Ya'an as an example, designers can strengthen the communication between tea and consumers through the interactive design of structures, materials and vision symbols, and bring consumers a new experience of drinking tea.

5. Conclusion

Agricultural products with rural tourism characteristics are not only commodities, but also unique cultural symbols nurtured by the environment and habitants. The application of regional cultural elements in packages of characteristic agricultural products can organically combine the cultural heritage with rural revitalization. On one hand, it promotes the spreading and inheritance of regional culture. On the other hand, it opens up a broader market for the selling of characteristic agricultural products in rural tourism destinations, and produces a win-win effect.

Acknowledgement

This paper is the outcome of the study, Research on the Package Design for Characteristic Agricultural Products in Rural Tourism Destinations Based on Regional Cultural Features, which is supported by the Special Fund for Social Research Projects of Sichuan Agricultural University. The project No. is 2015YB08. It is also the outcome of the study, Research on Visual Symbols with Regional Cultural Features in Packages of Characteristic Agricultural Products in Rural Tourism Destinations, which is supported by the Foundation of Sichuan Research Center on Featured Agricultural Brand Development and Communication. The project No. is CAB1611.

References

- [1] Li S W. Research on the Development of Rural Tourism in Ya'an [D], Sichuan Agricultural University, 2016
- [2] McKinsey China Consumer Survey 2007: "Double-click" Chinese Consumers, <https://www.mckinsey.com.cn/>, 2017.12.23
- [3] <http://www.Ya'an.gov.cn/Ya'an/5fd61db4-2db0-49f8-9691-c69dc7177f4e.html>.