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Analyzing the Culture Codes of Coca Cola in China Utilizing CCBD

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ABSTRACT

In contemporary times, an increasing number of firms are realizing the significance of brand identity and packaging design. In light of escalating competition, new packaging designs are emerging, prompting numerous teams to actively engage in creating innovative and appealing product packaging designs. With the market flooding with diverse beverage products, consumers tend to compare equivalent products and often become indecisive while making purchases. Notably, consumer decisions are no longer solely based on personal preferences, but branding awareness plays a crucial role in their purchasing patterns. Additionally, peer recommendations also influence consumer behavior. As such, the current consumer culture has entered an age of individualization and diversification. Furthermore, besides the basic protective attributes of beverage packaging, the packaging's primary goal should shift to young consumers with high purchasing power who constitute the primary target audience. Integrating design elements that young consumers cherish, such as cartoons, star posters, and other relevant features, will actively engage such individuals. Brands can opt to interact with young consumers by using themes associated with the youth, such as energy and freedom, thereby tapping into their desire to purchase resulting in increased consumption. This study aims to understand which beverage packaging design can raise user interest and improve purchasing power. Consequently, through analysis, the research seeks to comprehend the existing scenarios and future developments in China's leading beverage packaging designs. Coca-Cola's logo design and most sold beverage packaging designs in the Chinese market by 2022 constitute the research scope. The research methodology encompasses literature investiga-

tion and analysis to comprehend customer purchasing patterns. Additionally, the study analyzes the impact of exceptional product packaging designs on sales, employing cultural code analysis. Results show that unique and interesting packaging designs capture users' attention, which, in the long term, results in a unique cultural code that instantly identifies such products.

KEYWORDS

Beverage packaging design, user purchasing power, cultural code, brand image, packaging design.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Well-designed product packaging is crucial for publicity and promotion. Eye-catching packaging can help consumers remember a product when faced with numerous options, and excellent packaging design can guide users towards making an informed choice. Distinctive packaging not only establishes its own unique cultural code, but also helps customers identify the product at a glance, and enhances the brand's visibility. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of initial and repeat purchases.

In today's competitive global market, enterprises need to use effective packaging concepts to promote their products and strengthen their brand image. Companies need to pay attention to not only the quality of the product itself, but also the packaging and marketing strategies. Effective packaging design creates a powerful brand image that can be used to expand the business scope and increase profits. Therefore, as designers, it is crucial to create product designs that embody the company's culture.

The objective of this study is to explore how beverage packaging design can increase customer interest and purchasing power. Furthermore, this analysis will identify the current situation and future trends of China's best-selling beverage packaging designs.

RESEARCH SCOPE RESEARCH METHOD

The research scope covers Coca-Cola's logo design and packaging design and the beverage packaging design with the highest sales volume in the Chinese beverage market by 2022. The research method is to investigate the development history and current situation of Coca-Cola in China, the development history of design packaging of Coca-Cola, and the literature investigation of

the top several beverage industries with the highest sales volume in China in 2022 to understand the case status of customer purchase status in beverage packaging promotion. The influence of excellent product packaging design on product sales was studied with the analysis of cultural code. The results show that people will pay attention to and buy certain products with unique and interesting packaging design, which shows that when a product has its own unique cultural code, it has a huge impact on sales. Therefore, enterprises and designers must strengthen product packaging design while ensuring the basic functions of product packaging, forming their own unique cultural code that is well known by the majority of users, thereby improving corporate influence and increasing product sales.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PACKAGING DESIGN

In the current scenario, competition within the beverage industry is escalating, and a novel concept has emerged in the form of packaging competition. Packaging is a creative process of designing packaging art that combines artistic elements with traditional economic development to create a unique cultural code, which attracts customers towards the product and induces them to make a purchase. When consumers seek to purchase a product, they compare several similar products and evaluate brand recognition. The consumer culture has entered a phase of individualisation and variation. The core objective of packaging is to protect the product. In beverage packaging, protection entails ensuring that the product remains safe during storage and handling and that there is no leakage or contamination. Once this basic requirement is fulfilled, the product packaging design should be optimised to represent the individuality of the product. Furthermore, packaging must have a promotional impact. Packaging must captivate consumers, and design elements such as colour, pattern, and font can convey significant information about the brand and enterprise while creating a memorable brand identity for the customer. By using exclusive packaging designs in the long run, the product's unique cultural code can be maintained, boosting overall product visibility and enabling customers to recognise the product in the dark.

The concept of brand image and the impact of beverage packaging on brand image

In the era of individualization and diversification brought on by consumer culture, the brand logo is the first point of contact for consumers, and as such plays a vital role in setting a company's products apart from those of its com-

petitors. It is clear that companies must prioritize their logos in order to make a positive first impression on users, increase brand awareness and favorability, and ensure that their products stand out. As a result, it is crucial to enhance the novelty and uniqueness of product packaging design in order to prevent tarnishing the company's image. Underestimating the importance of product packaging design can prove to be a costly mistake, as it is a powerful tool for publicity. With the advent of ever more sophisticated product packaging designs, consumers become more curious, and so it is increasingly important to pay attention to packaging design and concepts to harness this powerful force of promoting enterprise growth and competition. Selecting the right brand logo is an essential first step, after which the company can focus on reasonable packaging design to further strengthen brand image. The enterprise brand image represents the impression of the enterprise on the consumer market, and is a hidden asset in that market. The image portrayed by a brand reflects the product itself - a consumer's perception of the company's brand affects their perception of the product and becomes part of their psychological framework. As a result, companies must shift from a producer-centered to a consumer-centered approach, focusing on creating positive brand images through corporate logos and product packaging design in order to lay a solid foundation for future development.

HISTORY AND PACKAGING DESIGN OF COCA-COLA IN CHINA

1. The development history of Coca-Cola in China

The Coca-Cola Company, established on May 8, 1886, is the leading worldwide beverage enterprise. The Coca-Cola brand had a presence in Asia during the early 20th century, initially manufactured in the Philippines and exported to China, where it was vended in cities such as Shanghai. In 1927, Coca-Cola was first produced in Shanghai and Tianjin, eventually expanding to Qingdao and Guangzhou. By 1933, the Shanghai Coca-Cola plant was the largest "Coca-Cola" plant outside of the United States, and in 1948, it became the inaugural plant outside of the United States to exceed one million cases produced annually.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>



<The image is sourced from the internet.>



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

Although Coca-Cola first entered China in 1927, it withdrew from the Chinese mainland in 1949 following the departure of the US embassy. Coca-Cola returned to China in 1978 and, after more than a decade of development, the Coca-Cola Company established 42 canned beverage factories in China with an annual sales volume of 10 billion yuan. In the 1999 National Urban Consumer Survey¹, Coca-Cola once again ranked highest in market share, best brand, and awareness among similar products.

Under the pressure of China's national beverage industry, Coca-Cola Company began to adjust its marketing strategy and underwent localization in the Chinese market. Coca-Cola has always placed importance on advertising, and its entry into the Chinese market was no exception, investing tens of millions of yuan in publicity annually. However, Coca-Cola's advertising and brand positioning were strictly limited. Chinese consumers associated Coca-Cola with its bright red color and energetic shape, typical American style, and American personality impressions. For more than a decade, advertising campaigns were largely based on American television commercials with Chinese narration, a strategy that remained in place until 1998. With the development of Chinese national beverage brands, Coca-Cola's marketing strategy underwent a significant change in 1999. Its TV commercials launched in China were the first to be

¹ Also known as merger and acquisition research (U&A research), is a survey of consumer behavior, habits and attitudes. Widely used in household appliances, food, beverage, cosmetics, washing products, daily necessities and other FMCG and durable consumer goods and other industries.

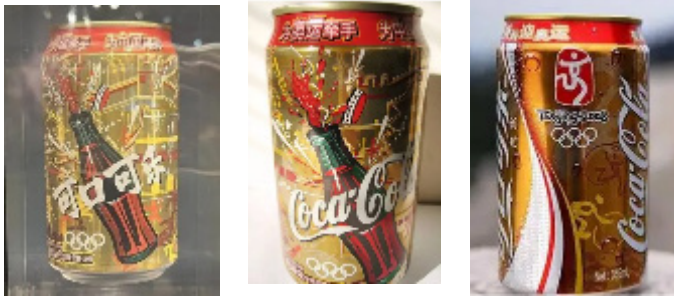
shot in China and the first to be designed by a Chinese advertising company. In order to gain more market share, Coca-Cola made great strides in implementing Chinese localization.

In China, Coca-Cola sponsors many Chinese sports activities and actively promotes the development of sports in China. Coca-Cola spares no effort in promoting the Olympic culture in China, sharing the passion and vitality of the Olympic Games with ordinary Chinese people, and using the Olympic platform to showcase China to the world.²

As the only company fully sponsoring the Special Olympics, Olympic, Paralympic, World Expo, Olympic, and Youth Olympic Games in China, Coca-Cola has earned its place as a dedicated contributor to China's development.³

The Coca-Cola World Cup Flag-Bearer Program⁴ is a global initiative that selects exceptional young people to serve as flag-bearers and ball boys during the World Cup. To date, over 30 talented Chinese children have had the privilege of participating in this program.⁵

In 2015, Coca-Cola launched its limited edition "Coca-Cola Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic Congratulations Commemorative Jar," to commemorate Beijing and Zhangjiakou's successful bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics.⁶



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

² Coca-Cola supports sports in China. Xinhuanet

³ Coca-Cola and the Chinese torchbearer. Tencent.

⁴ A World Cup flag bearer is involved in and completes the escort of the FIFA flag into the World Cup stadium. Six flag bearers will be assigned to each pre-match ceremony of the World Cup, and six flag bearers will escort the FIFA flag into the stadium before the start of the game.

⁵ World Cup flag bearer born. Sina.com.

⁶ Congratulating Beijing 2022 to enjoy the passion of the Olympic Games Coca-Cola rushed gold commemorative cans. Sohu Sports.



2. The logo design of Coca-Cola has undergone a lot of changes, from color



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

The Coca-Cola logo has undergone multiple iterations in terms of color and font. For instance, the first Coca-Cola logo was designed in 1886 in Atlanta, United States, and was characterized by a regular and straightforward design.

COCA-COLA.

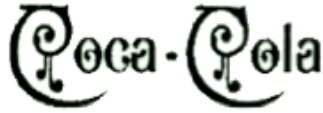
<The image is sourced from the internet.>

From 1887 to 1890, the Coca-Cola typography underwent a transformation into a more refined and casual style, featuring a delicate ribbon tail beneath the letter “C”. During this period, the brand sought to project an image of athleticism, liveliness, and freedom.

Coca-Cola

<The image is sourced from the internet.>

Between 1890 and 1891, Coca-Cola’s iconic ribbon took on a more swirling appearance, but this version of the logo lasted for only a year.


 The image shows an early version of the Coca-Cola logo, featuring the words "Coca-Cola" in a highly decorative, blackletter-style font with intricate flourishes and a central hyphen.

<The image is sourced from the internet.>

From 1941 to 1960, as the shape of Coca-Cola was firmly established, several adjustments were made.


 The image shows the Coca-Cola logo with a white ribbon flowing underneath the text, set against a dark background. The script font is more fluid and recognizable than the previous version.

<The image is sourced from the internet.>

In 1958, the famous fishtail logo of Coca-Cola was introduced, symbolizing the company's ongoing evolution and pursuit of excellence.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

In 1969, the Coca-Cola logo adopted a square background with a flowing white ribbon underneath it.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

In 2003, subtle additions were made to the logo, including yellow highlights and bubbles, evoking the refreshing and effervescent taste of Coca-Cola.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

After undergoing many changes in 2007, Coca-Cola returned to its classic design.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

The Coca-Cola 125th Anniversary logo for 2011 showcases a effervescent Coca-Cola bottle with the words “125th anniversary” running through it.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

3. The evolution of Coca-Cola’s packaging design is typically divided into four stages.

The first stage was the cup phase, followed by the reusable glass bottle phase. The third stage saw the introduction of disposable metal cans, and the last stage was marked by the adoption of disposable plastic packaging bottles.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

3.1 Develop and Market the Cup

In 1886, Coca-Cola was first created in Atlanta, the United States. Due to the hot climate in Atlanta, locals favored cold drinks and many shops sprouted up to cater to this demand. Thus, the original Coca-Cola was only known as a regional specialty drink in the southern cities of the United States.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

3.2 Reusable Glass Bottles

To expand its reach in the market, Coca-Cola created the “bottling license system.” This system allowed the company to sell its syrup to authorized bottlers, who then added water and sold it as a finished product. Distributors at the time commonly used clear, green, or brown straight-sided glass bottles as containers, charging 1 to 2 cents on the bottle when the drink was purchased and then depositing it for a refund once the consumer had finished the drink. At the time, Coca-Cola bottles were reused an estimated 22 times, circulating back and forth between bottlers and consumers.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

In 1899, Asa Candler, the President of the Coca-Cola Company, sold the bottling rights of the majority of the United States for a nominal sum of \$1. That same year, the first Coca-Cola bottling plant was established in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The initial bottling process involved the use of straight

Hutchinson glass bottles fitted with metal stoppers.⁷



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

By 1906, the American bottling plant had shifted to using a considerable number of amber-colored straight bottles that were engraved with the Coca-Cola logo.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

However, due to the simple design of the bottle, it was easy to replicate, leading to a proliferation of counterfeit products. Coca-Cola, therefore, resolved to design a distinctive and easily recognizable bottle that would stand out from similar products in the market. The bottle would need to be identifiable through touch alone in the dark and easily recognizable even if it was broken on the ground. The Root Glass Company, based in Indiana, was contracted to develop the iconic curved Coca-Cola bottle⁸. After the curved design was selected from numerous submissions, Coca-Cola made further modifications before adopting it as the official bottle in 1916. The curved contour revolutionized Coca-Cola's branding strategy, cementing its position as a leader in the beverage industry.

⁷ A specific name for a glass bottle

⁸ Curved bottle names



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

In December of 1923, the patent for the previous curved bottle of Coca-Cola expired and the Coca-Cola Company subsequently submitted a new patent application. From then on, whether it was adjusting the size of the model, perfecting the curve's curvature, or transitioning to a plastic container, the design has not deviated from its signature curve. By 1949, a study indicated that over 99 percent of Americans were able to identify Coca-Cola based solely on its packaging. The Coca-Cola Arc bottle has thus become renowned as a cultural icon of Coca-Cola.

The unique packaging design of Coca-Cola's curved bottle has become one of the most recognizable symbols of popular culture worldwide. In 1950, the Coca-Cola curved bottle achieved the distinction of being the first commercial product to grace the cover of Time magazine⁹. Subsequently, in 1960, the Coca-Cola Arc bottle was granted registered trademark status by the United States Patent Office. Today, it represents the most widely recognized packaging bottle shape globally and continues to inspire a plethora of exclusive and elegant packaging bottles.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

⁹ Time, also known as Time, was founded in 1923 as one of the first weekly news magazines to appear in nearly a century, offering a window on global news to a new and growing international readership. Time is one of the three major weekly news magazines in the United States, with a wide range of content, publishing opinions on international issues and tracking reports on major international events.

3.3 Stage of Disposable Metal Packaging

In 1955, the Coca-Cola Company commenced the use of metal cans as disposable packaging containers. The advent of disposable containers brought unparalleled convenience to distributors and afforded Coca-Cola significant cost savings. Initially introducing 12-ounce¹⁰ alloy cans, a problem soon emerged, as non-returnable cans and empty bottles generated a sizeable amount of waste. Consumers vehemently complained about corporate profligacy as tens of thousands of disposable bottles and cans were discarded throughout parklands, rivers, and other areas in the United States, which resulted in significant environmental pollution. In response to the censure of the government and consumers, and to enhance its image, Coca-Cola, along with other beverage and metal canning companies in the United States, and packaging companies, jointly established the country's first anti-waste organization, "Keep Beautiful America"¹¹ in 1953. This organization was formed to emphasize that individual citizens, rather than corporations, should be held accountable for the reckless disposal of waste bottles and cans. It is everyone's responsibility to safeguard the environment. Furthermore, the organization shifted the blame from companies that produce such products to consumers who carelessly discard them. As such, it highlighted the perniciousness of "litterbugs," urging the general public to be mindful of their actions.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

3.4 The Era of Plastic Bottles Popularity Worldwide

In the mid-1970s, the Coca-Cola Company initiated trials with a new container material, namely plastic. The executives at Coca-Cola were optimistic, believing that plastic would soon become the most optimal packaging material in the future, leading to significant energy savings. Consequently, plastic was

¹⁰ Anglo-American unit of weight
¹¹ Keep America Beautiful, KAB for short

utilized as a material for Coca-Cola bottles.

However, due to the increasingly pressing environmental concerns, the issue of dirty bottles and cans resurged in 1967, where 21 states in the United States proposed a ban on disposable containers. This posed a major threat to beverage industry giants, leading to former rivals Coca-Cola and PepsiCo joining forces to fight against government decisions aimed at dismantling the prevailing system. Together, they reiterated through the American Soft Drink Association that “people, not the containers themselves,” are responsible for the surge in waste problems. Nonetheless, on April 26, 1970, the last day of the first Earth Week in the United States, a demonstration consisting of approximately 1,500 protesters gathered in Atlanta and marched about three miles to Coca-Cola headquarters. They left bags of garbage in front of the company’s headquarters, symbolizing their refusal to shoulder the “blame” and burden imposed upon them by the company. In 1972, when the proposed ban on single-use beverage containers appeared in the Senate once more, the Carbonated Beverage Container Manufacturers Association insisted that if the use of single-use containers was abolished, the entire soft drink canning industry would crumble, leading to major social consequences like reduced employment opportunities. Ultimately, Congress rejected the ban. The beverage industry was subsequently rescued with federal aid. The Resource Conservation and Recycling Act was implemented and emphasized that the disposal of single-use packaging waste is a public issue, not merely a corporate responsibility. Consequently, Coca-Cola evaded any semblance of blame.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

In 2008, Turner Duckworth designed an aluminum contour can for Coca-Cola.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

Coca-Cola also introduced the contoured 2-liter bottle to the market in 2008.



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

PACKAGING DESIGN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF POPULAR BEVERAGES IN CHINA

In the fiercely competitive business landscape, packaging design has become an indispensable component of commodities. For instance, tea packaging in China features excellent design that is usually divided into three categories: Representing tea drink materials using realistic photographic imagery or image spokespersons, incorporating unique brand symbols or cultural codes to facilitate quick consumer identification of products, and displaying brand values and images in a more sophisticated manner using illustration. Realistic photography or image spokespersons are excellent packaging design elements to highlight raw material authenticity, as it is simple yet effective. Image spokespersons can attract fans and drive consumption. Packaging design featuring cultural codes can establish a positive brand image and enable quick brand identification. Meanwhile, illustration as packaging design effectively conveys product concept beauty, contributing to consumer identity and market sales of tea beverages.¹² Another example is Wang Lao Ji, a brand of Chinese herbal tea beverage. Wang Lao Ji's designer utilizes the cultural code methodology analysis to determine that introducing chili and sweat visuals in packaging design imbues a meaning of summer and spiciness to products. Wang Lao Ji's packaging design features yellow letters on red background, suggesting its relativity to

¹² Xiao Xin, Dai Qifeng, Research on Tea Beverage Packaging Design Based on Illustration [J]. Hunan Packaging, 2022

fire and heat. On the other hand, blue background packaging creates a pleasing, cool atmosphere, directly conveying the theme and the message of accompanying advertising copies. With its strong, vivid blue-red color scheme and visual effects, consumers instantly pay attention to and desire Wang Lao Ji's products. Over time, consumers can identify Wang Lao Ji's herbal tea beverage without much scrutiny, proving that packaging sets the tone of the brand. Beverage packaging designs typically involve creating bottle shape and arranging visual symbols of graphic, color, and text combinations to effectively communicate product information. Packaging design enhances the brand identity and recognition among young consumers. Meanwhile, beverage packaging design caters to younger demographics, featuring the following traits.¹³



<The image is sourced from the internet.>

In addition to the well-known Chinese brand Nongfu Spring, the packaging design of Nongfu Spring mineral water is predominantly white and red, with a hint of green. The red font is particularly attention-grabbing, while the green represents the mountain, signifying that this brand's water originates from mountain springs. The wrapping paper in the middle/lower section of the bottle features a more visually comfortable design, which enables easy recognition from either the front or the back. Nongfu Spring is also renowned for its advertising slogan, "Nongfu Spring has a little sweetness." Often, "farmer's spring" brings to mind this advertising tagline unintentionally.







<The image is sourced from the internet.>

¹³ Li Xueyi, Chen Ruijuan. Analysis on the innovation of beverage packaging design under the orientation of youth [J]. Art Education Research, 2020

Package design is one of the design forms that is most closely related to consumers' daily lives. In the process of self-shopping in large shopping malls, the attractiveness of product packaging design has become an important factor in promoting sales. The following table ranks the high-sales beverages in China in 2022, along with some simple analysis of logos and package design.

Brand logo	Brand Zhang, shortcomings	Package design	Characteristics of package design
	<p>The iconic brand of Coca-Cola is characterized by a red background and white cursive English font, with a white ribbon at the bottom.</p>		<p>The curved bottle is also a classic symbol of Coca-Cola.</p>
	<p>The blue background of Kangshifu represents the purity of water, while the white calligraphy font symbolizes traditional Chinese culture.</p>		<p>The fresh blue packaging bottle has a slender waist, making it convenient to hold.</p>
	<p>It embodies the brand's philosophy of green mountains and clean water.</p>		<p>The packaging was made in red, representing China, and the packaging also embodied sancheon, the brand name of Mountain spring.</p>
	<p>Pepsi-Cola's blue signifies summer and is simply represented by white, red, blue, tricolor fonts, and a ball as its logo.</p>		<p>The slightly wider bottle focuses on blue, which refreshes and quenches thirst.</p>
	<p>Black with the logo red-orange bird pattern.</p>		<p>Oranges are quick to capture the flavor of a drink.</p>

Brand logo	Brand Zhang, shortcomings	Package design	Characteristics of package design
	The red and white combination of Wahaha is bold and concise.		The simple red and white give people a healthy and clean feeling.
	The theme of the drink is highlighted in red calligraphy		Red symbolizes spicy and hot, and the drink has the effect of quenching thirst.

<The image is sourced from the internet.>

Industry Development Trends in China's Beverage Packaging Market:

DIVERSIFICATION

Apart from creating new products with brand characteristics that grab consumer attention, beverage packaging design has become a crucial link in the industry. Consequently, the production of varied products with diverse packaging designs has emerged as a trend in the beverage market.

HEALTHIER OPTIONS

Previously, carbonated drinks with fun and attractive flavors were popular. However, with more profound understanding of the negative effects of such drinks on human health (including obesity, calcium-uptake interference, teeth damage, and stone formation), consumption of carbonated drinks has decreased. To meet the needs of health-conscious individuals, many beverage manufacturers have begun introducing “0 sugar”, “0 calories”, and “0 fat” in their packaging design.

GENTRYFICATION

In recent years, consumers have become increasingly concerned about the taste, health, and packaging aesthetics of beverages, culminating in a shift from

price focus to quality preference. To satisfy the growing demand for higher-quality products, enterprises are actively investing more in the visible aspects of their products - especially packaging design - to represent a high-end appearance. With this approach, designers aim to convey the product's story as a symbol of luxury and a more sophisticated life. In the near future, packaging in the beverage industry is likely to witness significant development with a higher emphasis on health, diversification, and high-quality design. Designers in this sector must keep up-to-date with trends, exploit these trends through product design, and marketing, to build strong, competitive brand identities.

CONCLUSION

Beverage packaging design must carefully consider consumer needs, while enhancing the artistic and interesting aspects of container shape, visual elements and brand positioning. It is important to avoid similarities with other brands. With excellent creativity and outstanding product packaging design, enterprises can effectively promote their products by utilizing packaging design to emphasize their features, create a unique cultural identity and gain wider recognition. Such design can also reflect the brand image of the enterprise, helping it to expand its business scope and maximize profits. Proper utilization of advertising and product packaging design is therefore a key priority for companies seeking growth. Research has shown that consumers pay special attention to beverage packaging design, indicating its crucial impact on consumer demand. Consumers are often attracted to products simply due to the unique and interesting nature of their packaging designs. As such, in this era of rapid internet development, enterprises and designers must place equal focus on ensuring the basic functions of product packaging, as well as on strengthening product packaging design to attract users, generate interest and form a unique cultural code for product sales.

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