

# A Study on the Packaging Design of Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck from Sichuan Based on Emotional Design Theory

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## Abstract

Taking Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck as the subject of study, this paper analyses the current state and issues in packaging design for Sichuan's regional culinary specialities. It explores pathways for translating regional cultural elements into packaging design, proposing a three-tiered design framework grounded in Emotional Design principles: instinctual-level design, behavioural-level design, and reflective-level design. This approach offers effective insights for packaging design of Leshan's sweet-skinned duck products while providing theoretical reference and research paradigms for the modern development of Sichuan's distinctive culinary heritage.

## Keywords

Sweet-skinned duck, packaging design, Emotional Design, regional culture.

## 1. Introduction

Sichuan, renowned as the "Land of Abundance," possesses abundant natural resources and distinctive regional culture, creating uniquely favourable conditions for culinary development. In today's era of highly developed tourism and e-commerce, consumer habits have undergone subtle shifts. The accelerated market-driven development model has intensified the trend towards productisation of Sichuan's local specialities, with product packaging emerging as a critical element in commercial sales. While Sichuan's local cuisine has seen substantial industrial growth, its packaging design lags behind. This imbalance stems from the mismatch between the industry's expanding demands and the insufficient supply of packaging solutions. The industry requires packaging to fulfil multiple roles: functional support, brand communication, and cultural representation. Yet existing designs exhibit clear shortcomings in functionality, cultural resonance, and market adaptability. Leshan, a major culinary hub within Sichuan, similarly faces these challenges.

## 2. Analysis of the Current Packaging Situation for Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck

Sweet-skinned duck is a renowned delicacy of Leshan, Sichuan, with origins traceable to the Qing Dynasty. Through generations of local folk tradition and development, it has evolved a distinctive production technique. Prepared using locally sourced mallard ducks through meticulous processes including braising, deep-frying, glazing, and cooling, Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck boasts a crisp exterior, tender interior, and rich aroma. It remains not only a staple delicacy for locals but also a must-buy souvenir for tourists visiting the region.

Currently, the majority of sweet-skinned duck vendors in Leshan are street-side individual traders, numbering in the hundreds and commanding a significant share of the local food market. However, most operators still employ an extensive retail model, lacking distinct brand identities. There is a general disconnect from contemporary aesthetic trends, insufficient analysis of target consumer needs, and neglect of the impact of modern social media platforms on brand packaging. This presents a considerable gap compared to the packaging design of

similar cured and roasted products, or braised delicacies, found in regions such as Guangdong and Jiangsu.

### **2.1. Severe Homogeneity in Packaging Formats**

The sales packaging for Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck products predominantly relies on plain plastic bags, differing only in brand name with minimal variation. This homogeneity—characterised by identical designs, high similarity, and overlapping elements—diminishes brand recognition, inducing both visual and psychological fatigue among consumers[1]. In an era emphasising culinary branding and aesthetic individuality, Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck products must evolve beyond their current monotonous and homogenised packaging.

### **2.2. Lack of Cultural Expression in Packaging**

Beyond listing primary sales information, Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck packaging exhibits virtually no cultural content. Within packaging design, culture represents one of the most fundamental creative activities in design practice. Contemporary design constitutes a continuous extension of cultural heritage, and design re-creation should likewise draw inspiration from cultural roots[2]. Presently, Sweet-Skinned Duck packaging demonstrates significant deficiencies in both regional cultural heritage transmission and culinary culture promotion.

### **2.3. Insufficient Packaging Functionality**

Existing packaging for Sweet-Skinned Duck lacks analysis of consumer behaviour. While a rudimentary connection exists between product and packaging design, they are not fully aligned, resulting in an imbalance[3]. Product packaging fails to incorporate differentiated designs tailored to diverse consumption scenarios, diminishing the consumer's dining experience. Packaging materials and techniques require enhancement to preserve freshness and extend shelf life, accommodating prolonged transportation and storage. This would enable Leshan's sweet-skinned duck cuisine to transcend geographical constraints, facilitating nationwide distribution and expanding market reach.

## **3. Emotional Design Strategies in Sweet-Skinned Duck Packaging**

Comprehensive analysis reveals that current sweet-skinned duck products remain at the most rudimentary stage of functional packaging, lacking design elements that foster emotional connections with consumers. Emotional design serves as a primary methodology to enhance user satisfaction and experience by fulfilling consumer needs. Scholar Donald Norman linked design to Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, proposing "instinctive-level design, behavioural-level design, and reflective-level design"[4]. These three elements are both mutually influential and form a progressively deeper relationship. Based on this theory, effective design strategies for Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck packaging can be developed.

### **3.1. Instinctual-Level Design Based on Visual Perception**

Instinctive-level design focuses on stimulating sensory experiences through the design of an object's form and appearance. The packaging for Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck Dessert should visually reflect regional culinary characteristics while incorporating brand identity analysis. Its primary design elements comprise colour, graphics, form, and texture.

Colour application on Sweet-Skinned Duck packaging must first capture consumer attention. Drawing from colour psychology, it should symbolically reflect product attributes to evoke tangible associations. Beyond the prevalent red seen on existing Sweet-Skinned Duck packaging, warm hues like yellow and orange may be considered to catch the eye and stimulate appetite. Neutral tones such as black, white, grey, and brown can accentuate the brand's cultural identity and elevate the packaging's perceived quality. Regarding graphics, the central

"duck" element requires optimised design, with detailed rendering or minimalist styling chosen according to the desired visual aesthetic. Simultaneously, regional elements of Leshan (such as the Giant Buddha, Mount Emei, culinary craftsmanship, landmark streetscapes, and flora) should be extracted and translated into a series of graphics to achieve decorative effects on the packaging. Furthermore, the packaging for Sweet-Skinned Duck should transcend the current basic forms of plastic carrier bags and rectangular paper boxes. Consideration should be given to more diverse packaging designs, such as variations in box shape and size, alongside innovations in carrier bag materials and craftsmanship. This approach aims to gain consumer recognition through visual aesthetics.

### **3.2. Behavioural-level design based on multifunctionality**

The functional level, commonly termed design usability, emphasises an object's practicality and utility. Current Sweet-Skinned Duck packaging exhibits limited functionality. Leveraging packaging's multifaceted attributes, expansion should address market segmentation, portable convenience, and eco-conscious principles.

Given the current packaging status, Sweet-Skinned Duck products require segmented packaging designs to address diverse consumer purchasing needs. Beyond standard product packaging, specialised variants such as "Premium Gift Packaging," "Takeaway Ready-to-Eat Packaging," and "E-commerce Series Packaging" can be developed for specific usage scenarios. For instance, "Premium Gift Packaging" would employ intricate manufacturing techniques to enhance decorative appeal. "Takeaway Ready-to-Eat Packaging" could introduce modular small-sized individual portions, accompanied by disposable gloves and wet wipes. "E-commerce Series Packaging" requires more robust structures to prevent crushing and breakage, while extending shelf life to enhance consumer satisfaction.

For user-friendly packaging, employ easy-open structures like "easy-tear" or "zipper-style" openings, enabling swift and convenient access. Larger household packs may incorporate resealable designs using specialised materials to preserve the duck's freshness and texture, ensuring consumer confidence and satisfaction.

From an environmental perspective, as Leshan is a tourist city, further research and design are required for the packaging materials of Sweet-Skinned Duck. Prioritise the use of paper-based materials, bio-based plastics (PLA), bamboo, and wood materials to facilitate recycling and biodegradation, integrating eco-friendly principles into the packaging design.

### **3.3. Reflection-Based Design Addressing Cultural and Emotional Needs**

Within design studies, culture is regarded as a vital indicator of societal transformation, embodying the reciprocal influence between human emotions and socio-historical contexts. Philosopher Hegel posited that every artistic expression manifests distinctive characteristics of its era and ethnicity. Packaging design inherently carries temporal imprints from its inception, with each evolution of artistic style reflecting the contemporary development of humanistic spirit. In today's era of rapid technological advancement, packaging must evolve in tandem with both technological progress and humanistic trends to meet contemporary emotional demands. Consumers once perceived packaging solely in terms of "aesthetic appeal" and "protection," overlooking its role as a cultural vessel. Now, beyond practical functionality, consumers increasingly desire packaging that is visually pleasing, imbued with a sense of playfulness and human warmth. Amidst the emerging trend of synergistic development between tradition and innovation, regional and ethnic cultures are infusing packaging design with richer humanistic emotional elements.

Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck boasts over a century of history. Evolving from street vendors hawking their wares to modern commercial enterprises, its craftsmanship has been refined through generations of folk artisans. Transforming from the traditional "oil-blached duck" to

today's "sweet-skinned duck," it has become an irreplaceable local delicacy cherished by Leshan residents. Now, this dish serves not only as a culinary emblem but also as a repository of Leshan's cultural heritage. The packaging design for Sweet-Skinned Duck should deeply explore Leshan's cultural heritage, enabling consumers to perceive the city's regional character through the packaging and fostering an emotional connection. For instance, the packaging could feature Leshan's renowned streets and iconic architecture, or images of the old city, employing a fusion design to express the cultural distinctiveness of "Old Leshan". Alternatively, the design could focus on the production process, showcasing the ingredients and traditional preparation scenes of the Sweet-Skinned Duck, highlighting the craftsmanship inherent in this culinary delight. Furthermore, literary verses and phrases from historical texts related to Leshan's culture could be borrowed as conceptual starting points for expanded design. This approach would evoke the artistic conception of culinary culture, enhance visual readability, and further cultivate cultural imagination among consumers. Additionally, as the food consumer base increasingly trends towards younger demographics, the packaging design for Sweet-Skinned Duck should appropriately incorporate contemporary, youthful, and fashionable concepts. By innovatively reinterpreting traditional culture, it can establish a new era of cultural and emotional interaction with younger consumer groups.

#### 4. Conclusion

Sichuan's regional culinary specialities are advancing towards brand-oriented development, with packaging evolving under the influence of digital marketing channels like e-commerce livestreaming. This necessitates an innovative design paradigm blending "traditional heritage with contemporary expression". As a quintessential Sichuan delicacy, Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck's packaging bears the dual mission of preserving regional culture and enhancing product competitiveness.

Through multi-layered design integration, Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck's packaging not only strengthens brand recognition and cultural resonance but also expands market opportunities. Subsequent case studies and practical applications akin to Leshan Sweet-Skinned Duck's packaging design will emerge, continuously advancing the modern expression of traditional regional culture. This approach achieves a win-win scenario for both cultural value and commercial value through a harmonious blend of heritage preservation and innovation.

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