

# Research On Brand Communication Strategies and Packaging Design in The Era of New Media: A Case Study of Luckin Coffee

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**Abstract.** Based on the new characteristics of media and consumers in the era of new media, this paper summarizes the communication strategies of brands in the new media era, proposes considerations for brand packaging design, and demonstrates them with the example of Luckin Coffee. In the era of new media, the omnipotence of media and the initiative of consumers have a significant impact on brand communication. Enterprises should actively adapt to the trends of the times, establish brand communication strategies, and carry out packaging design.

**Keywords:** New media era; brand communication; communication strategy; packaging design.

## 1. Introduction

The concept of New Media was born in the United States in the 1960s and refers to emerging media that are distinct from traditional media [1]. From a definitional perspective, the scope of this concept is directly related to social environment and technological level. Since the 21st century, with the rapid development of mobile Internet technology, various forms of new media have begun to emerge and gradually become important factors influencing people's daily life choices. This disruptive change signifies that the New Media Era, characterized by real-time and digital features, has arrived. In the era of new media, traditional means of information dissemination face tremendous impact and challenges. In response to the social changes brought about by the new media era, it is an urgent issue for today's brands to determine how to develop new communication strategies and guide packaging design based on these changes.

## 2. Media and Consumers in the Era of New Media

The advent of new media has not only provided convenience for consumers but also had a significant impact on brand marketing and promotion. From the perspective of communication studies, this impact is mainly reflected in two aspects: the media and the consumers.

### 2.1. The All-Powerful New Media

In the context of the new era, the role of media has undergone tremendous changes. Its main purpose is no longer merely to reflect reality accurately, but rather to shape reality in an appropriate manner. This concept conveys an important message: in contemporary times, the interpretation of information is often based not on its content but on the way, it is disseminated. Therefore, the media's position in information dissemination has been elevated. In response to this changing communication environment, the media must continuously evolve and improve itself to adapt to the new environment. The primary means of doing so is to integrate and enhance traditional media forms, fully combining their functions and characteristics to create new media. In the era of new media, digital technology provides a practical way for the creation of new media, allowing it to combine the information recording and storage functions of traditional print media such as books and newspapers with the wireless transmission capabilities of broadcast and television media, further enabling information retrieval and classification. This multifunctional capability-integrating information storage, reading, retrieval, and transmission-is one of the key features of new media [2].

## 2.2. The Proactive New Consumer

In the era of new media, consumers, as a crucial part of information dissemination, have gradually shifted their role over time. From the perspective of communication roles, consumers have moved from being passive targets to observers providing one-way feedback, and finally to participants engaging in two-way communication. From the perspective of communication channels, during the process of information dissemination, other consumers can also obtain the information, forming secondary dissemination channels among consumer groups. In this process, consumers' proactive selectivity has been unprecedentedly liberated. People now expect and have the capacity to choose personalized content independently. This change not only reflects the awakening of consumers' selective consciousness but also, to some extent, embodies the era's characteristic of mutual interaction and joint development between supply and demand in the new media era.

## 3. Brand Communication Strategies in the Era of New Media

In the era of new media, changes in the aforementioned factors also affect the way information is disseminated. For brands, the rules and strategies of brand communication should keep pace with the times. The following analyzes how brands should promote and communicate in the era of new media through the derivation and reconstruction of brand communication models.

### 3.1. Traditional Brand Communication Models and Their Limitations

In classic communication models, the communication process consists of a source, message, medium, and receiver, with information transmitted linearly and unidirectionally from the source through the medium to the receiver. Before the era of new media, media was solely controlled by the brand, which promoted itself by placing advertisements through the media. Consumers perceived the brand and its products via the media and decided whether to make a purchase. From this perspective, the production-consumption process between the brand and consumers bears similarities to classic communication models [3].

In the traditional brand communication model, the promotional actions of the brand function similarly to noise in classic communication models. The difference is that in this case, this noise facilitates the consumer's (receiver's) reception of information from the media rather than interfering with it. Moreover, consumers in this model follow the classic AIDMA model in marketing research: they are attracted by the brand's promotional information disseminated through the media, thereby gaining **attention**. As promotional information continues to reach and reinforce them, consumers gradually develop **interest** in the brand, **desire** to purchase its products, and **memory** of the brand. When encountering relevant products, consumers are likely to take **action** and make a purchase [4]. With continuous advancements in information technology, the omnipotence of new media has added new functions and missions that are not effectively reflected in the above model. The above model lacks an expression of consumers' subjective initiative. Therefore, its applicability to the contemporary context has diminished, necessitating its reconstruction. The AISAS model better reflects contemporary consumers' daily behaviors and emotional tendencies.

### 3.2. Brand Communication Model and Its Characteristics in the Era of New Media

Compared with the classic AIDMA model, the search and share components in the AISAS model highlight the shift of consumers from passively receiving information to actively making choices during the communication process, while also reflecting the two-way interaction of information between consumers and media. Based on this feature, a new brand communication model for the era of new media is reconstructed, and the following characteristics of the new model are summarized.

### **3.2.1 The “media” component in the original model is replaced by the “public opinion cluster” in the new model**

In contemporary society, the continuous emergence and development of new media have expanded the role of media from a single-function “information transmitter” to a multi-functional “information hub” capable of transmitting, storing, and classifying information, while also providing reliable data support for consumers’ search and sharing behaviors. By borrowing the concept of “dataset” from the field of computer science, contemporary media is referred to as a “public opinion cluster” to describe its sources and compositional characteristics [5].

### **3.2.2 The “consumer” in the original model is subdivided into two categories: “receiving consumers” and “potential consumers”**

The purpose of the distinction is to more clearly describe the implementation process of the AISAS model: “potential consumers” gain the brand’s **attention** from the “public opinion cluster”, gradually develop **interest** and **search** for additional relevant information in the “public opinion cluster” to decide their next **action**. If it is a “purchase action”, they become “receiving consumers” and can provide feedback on their consumption experience to the “public opinion cluster” through **share**; if it is a “refusal to purchase”, they exit the communication process and can provide feedback on their rejection reasons to the “public opinion cluster” through **share**.

### **3.2.3 The influencing factors of “noise” in the model have changed**

In the original model, the input to the media only came from the brand’s promotion, meaning that the noise was generated solely by the brand, and the brand had complete control over the content of the information in the media. In the new model, the input to the “opinion pool” not only includes the brand’s promotion but also consumers’ sharing. The impact of the latter on the “opinion pool” is uncertain; in other words, the information content in the “opinion pool” is no longer fully controlled by the brand, and the information bias could potentially be negative.

### **3.2.4 The new model adds feedback from the “opinion pool” to the brand**

The generation of the “opinion pool” not only provides consumers with a platform for searching and sharing but also creates a bridge for real-time communication between the brand and consumers. By reviewing and filtering the content of the “opinion pool”, the brand can quickly understand the current state of consumers and use this as a basis to implement precise opinion promotion, thereby achieving frequent interaction and communication with consumers.

## **3.3. Brand Communication Strategies**

From the perspective of the brand, combined with the model process, the following communication strategies can be derived.

### **3.3.1 Appropriately increase the brands’ own investment in public opinion**

This strategy is based on the brand’s influence on the “public opinion pool”. In the AISAS model, the brand still has a certain ability to influence the “public opinion pool”, so appropriately increasing the brand’s own investment in public opinion can enhance the quantity and proportion of positive information about the brand, thereby achieving the model’s objectives. As a traditional advertising-style brand communication method, the brand mainly focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency of communication. In the era of new media, brands should fully leverage the capabilities of new media, selecting appropriate content based on real-time and digital characteristics to guide the formation of public opinion topics and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of communication.

### **3.3.2 Guide consumers to engage in public opinion discussions and post more positive evaluations**

This strategy is based on consumers’ influence on the “public opinion pool”. In the AISAS model, consumers’ sharing behavior is the main source of information in the “public opinion pool”, so by stimulating more positive sharing actions from consumers, the brand can increase the quantity and

proportion of positive information in the “public opinion pool”, thereby achieving the model’s objectives. Accordingly, brands should fully utilize consumers’ initiative, combine with the diverse and comprehensive communication methods of new media, focus on stimulating their enthusiasm and creativity, and involve them in brand-building activities through interactive means.

### **3.3.3 Engage in brand collaborations to expand the “public opinion pool”**

This strategy is based on the dataset attribute of the “public opinion pool” itself. As a data collection, the “public opinion pool” can be combined with other similar collections through union operations. In the AISAS model, the corresponding behavior is the collaboration between brands. However, the merging of the “public opinion pool” between brands is not simply “1+1=2”: combining public opinions from different collections often produces some remarkable chemical reactions. Therefore, brands should comprehensively apply the aforementioned strategies according to the actual situation of the merged “public opinion pool”, actively increasing the quantity and proportion of positive information in the pool to achieve the goal of “1+1>2”.

## **4. Brand Packaging Design in the Era of New Media**

In the process of consumers forming perceptions of a brand, they often take its packaging as the first impression. Therefore, packaging is a decisive and important factor in brand communication. Based on the communication strategies mentioned above, and taking Luckin Coffee’s recent launches of various special packaging as examples, this section analyzes brand packaging design in the era of new media.

### **4.1. Opinion-Driven Design**

The design concept is to generate new topics through packaging design and release them to increase the number of topics in the “opinion set”. Specifically, in terms of packaging design, the following two principles should be followed [6].

Firstly, packaging design should pay attention to the real-time nature of public opinion among the general consumer group, keep up with current hot topics, and integrate the focus of public opinion into the design, achieving the brand’s mass-oriented communication. For example, at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, Eileen Gu, regarded as a highly anticipated “talked-about athlete”, achieved historic breakthroughs in multiple events and quickly dominated the trending topics on major social media platforms. Luckin Coffee seized this hot topic and created personal-themed packaging around Eileen Gu. In above case, Luckin Coffee demonstrated a keen awareness of real-time and trending topics and was able to reflect this content appropriately in packaging design.

Secondly, packaging design should also consider the differences in the needs of specific consumer groups to achieve the brand’s targeted communication. Supported by big data processing technology, brands can accurately identify such specific consumers from the general consumer group, analyze their consumption behaviors, and uncover their differentiated needs. In terms of packaging design, these needs should be transformed into forms that are easy for them to accept and display. For instance, Luckin Coffee’s “Little Blue Cup” and “Little Black Cup” packaging was created to differentiate consumer groups. The “Little Blue Cup” is the classic version aimed at the general consumers, while the “Little Black Cup” is designed for coffee enthusiasts. In the packaging design of the “Little Black Cup”, Luckin Coffee continued the minimalist design style of the “Little Blue Cup”, composed only of the brand logo and text, while the inherent sense of stability in black easily conveys the purity of the coffee inside. This differentiation further enhances the product’s sense of professionalism and quality. From a performance perspective, this design provides coffee enthusiasts with distinctive material for discussion, responds to their differentiated social needs, and effectively achieves targeted brand communication to this specific group [7].

## 4.2. Opinion Interaction-Oriented Design

The design concept aims to stimulate consumers' interaction and participation around existing topics through packaging design, thereby increasing the information heat of the "public opinion set". In the era of new media, the rapid access and dissemination of information provide people with a convenient platform for expressing their views. The formation of online communities signifies that people from all over can chat casually like neighbors, and the influence of the word-of-mouth effect has become increasingly prominent. Therefore, in specific design choices, the principle should be to favor consumer interaction and participation [8].

Firstly, the content of packaging design should have high recognizability, facilitating multi-channel dissemination of brand information. When designing packaging, attention should be paid to the uniqueness of design elements, ensuring their meanings are easy to identify and self-explanatory. This not only improves the accuracy and efficiency of consumer information recognition and lowers the threshold for interaction and participation but also helps establish a relatively unified common understanding among consumer groups, laying the foundation for multi-channel information dissemination. Luckin Coffee launched the "Grip Cup packaging during Christmas, featuring a pop art style on the cup design and incorporating fingerprints within some circular patterns. In this case, Luckin Coffee's use of the fingerprint element is very clever: on one hand, it conveys clear instructions to consumers—hold the cup at the indicated position. This action is easy to perform and replicate, and consumers who follow it will realize that it resembles the popular photo pose among contemporary young people. On the other hand, this element is relatively uncommon in packaging patterns, and consumers unfamiliar with it can immediately access related information through image recognition technologies such as scan. This invisibly increases consumer participation methods and the number of participants. Once this packaging was launched, it prompted a large number of consumers to share photos of themselves holding the cup on major social platforms, creating a new trending topic and sparking a fresh round of lively discussions.

Secondly, the content of packaging design should possess good interactivity to encourage consumers to generate UGC. The concept of "User Generated Content" (UGC) originated in the internet domain, emphasizing users' individuality and creativity. To prompt consumers to create UGC, it is necessary to preemptively embed some interesting "triggers" and provide consumers with a good example, guiding them to draw inferences and participate in brand communication. In this process, the quality of the example plays a decisive role in inspiring consumers' creativity and enthusiasm. Therefore, when conducting packaging design, the principle should be to enhance the inspirational quality of the examples, focusing on how to implement the "triggers", while considering consumers' understanding and practical abilities to lower the barrier to creation. Luckin Coffee places the brand's communication triggers on the post-use functions of their packaging, selecting simple shapes, similar styles, and easily combinable patterns as key design elements, paired with uniform background colors. This increases the spatial relevance and versatility of the packaging, enabling arbitrary folding, cutting, and interconnection or combination between packages. Based on this design, the official card sleeve produced by Luckin Coffee performed well. Coupled with its simplicity and high tolerance for errors, many consumers explored the potential of the packaging further, generating various derivative DIY creations. The formation of such UGC content signifies the integration of brand communication with consumers' social circles, with the brand repeatedly appearing in forms and content that consumers are willing to accept on their social platforms. This undoubtedly has a significant promoting effect on brand communication.

## 4.3. Public Opinion Integration Design

The design concept is to reflect the collaboration between brands through packaging design, achieving the expansion and merger of "public opinion clusters". The collaboration of two or more well-known large brands is often seen by consumer groups as a highly trending focal event. When designing packaging, it is important to closely center around the keyword collaboration, choosing expression methods that align with consumer needs and psychological tendencies to guide discussions.

At the same time, the continuity and scalability of the topic should be considered, and the design content should be appropriately processed to ensure wide dissemination and good interactivity. The co-branded packaging of Luckin Coffee and the Yeeshu brand is a typical example. In this case, Luckin Coffee selected and processed the most representative feature elements from each original packaging, continuing their original expressions in the most intuitive way. The original packaging styles of both brands had long become familiar to consumers as part of their respective brand IPs. The combined mixed style presented a focal topic of the collaboration: the fusion of established and emerging brands, and the collision of tradition and fashion. Through this packaging, Luckin Coffee directed consumer attention to the main product of this collaboration, the Coconut Cloud Latte, and leveraged the product's good taste to leave a lasting impression on consumers, achieving positive public opinion engagement [9].

## 5. Summary

In the era of new media, the all-encompassing nature of new media and the awakening of consumer subjective consciousness have led to brands no longer having dominant control over communication resources. The communication process has evolved from one-way linear dissemination to a two-way closed-loop communication, which raises higher demands for brand communication. In the face of such challenges, brands should start with the new characteristics of contemporary media and consumers, proactively optimize their communication strategies, focus on their own investment in public opinion, pay more attention to and cultivate consumer engagement, while also considering opportunities for win-win cooperation with other brands. By implementing these strategies through reasonable packaging design, brands can maintain their core competitiveness while achieving further development.

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