Article

From Fermented Taste to Regional Identity: A Study of Brand Image Design for Sichuan Doubanjiang and Fermented Tofu

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Citation: Tan, J., & Li, B. (2026). From Fermented Taste to Regional Identity: A Study of Brand Image Design for Sichuan Doubanjiang and Fermented Tofu. *Journal of Global Arts Studies*, 4(2), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.23112/jgas26063001

Received: May 24, 2026
Revised: June 7, 2026
Accepted: June 10, 2026
Published: June 30, 2026

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Abstract: ***Background:*** The visual expression of Sichuan fermented food brands often relies on regional symbols such as place names, chili peppers, and traditional patterns; however, the representation of fermentation techniques, taste experiences, and everyday memories remains relatively underexamined. ***Purpose:*** Consequently, by analyzing brand image redesign materials for Sichuan *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu as cases, this study examined how fermented taste is transformed into regional identity through visual systems. ***Methods:*** To this end, we adopted a qualitative visual case study approach. Specifically, we comparatively analyzed course-based redesign works for Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang and Tangchang fermented tofu across five key dimensions: ingredient identification, fermentation vessels, taste colors, everyday life narratives, and regional identity. ***Results:*** The analysis revealed that the *doubanjiang* case constructed a craft-authority-based identity through place of origin, fermentation vessels, a red color system, and process narratives. Conversely, the fermented tofu case constructed a domestic-memory-based identity through character imagery, earthenware jar vessels, a warm color system, and everyday-life narratives. ***Conclusion:*** In conclusion, our findings suggest that the regional identity of Sichuan fermented foods is not generated by a single local symbol; rather, it is formed through the coordinated visual translation of ingredients, fermentation durations, vessel mediation, taste intensity, and eating contexts.

Keywords: Sichuan fermented foods; *doubanjiang;* fermented tofu; brand image design; regional identity

1. Introduction

In a consumer context where local cultural resources are continuously recognized and transformed, traditional foods have become important vehicles for regional cultural communication and local brand construction. Indeed, previous studies have shown that traditional food is not merely a consumer product; rather, it also carries local knowledge, production techniques, dietary habits, and social memories, thereby making it an important component of local identity and cultural heritage (Bessière, 1998; Sims, 2009). This is particularly true of traditional fermented foods, whose value lies not only in the finished product's flavor but also in ingredient processing, fermentation durations, production vessels, ways of eating, and local life experiences. To illustrate, Sichuan *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu are both representative fermented foods, but their cultural associations differ. Specifically, *doubanjiang* is closely related to the compound flavor profiles of Sichuan cuisine and is often regarded as an important basis for the formation of Sichuan flavors; conversely, fermented tofu graces the family table more frequently and is associated with everyday side dishes, local craftsmanship, and intergenerational memories.

Despite this cultural richness, current local food brand image design generally emphasizes regional cultural expression; however, in practice, designers still tend to rely on high-frequency symbols such as place names, chilies, traditional patterns, and folk motifs to create a sense of place. Existing researchers have noted that if time-honored brands, intangible cultural heritage products, and regional food brands overuse similar historical symbols and regional images, visual expression may become homogenized and brand differentiation may be weakened (Zheng, 2016; Zhu & Qiu, 2025). Rather than relying on surface-level aesthetics, the branding of regional culture must move beyond superficial local interest to establish a deeper visual order among cultural contexts, user experiences, and communication scenarios (Li & Zhang, 2020). This is especially relevant for fermented foods; indeed, locality does not derive merely from place names or external motifs. Instead, such locality is generated more deeply through ingredient processing, jar fermentation, vessel use, taste accumulation, and everyday eating practices.

Building on this premise, we examine how fermented taste is transformed into regional identity through visual systems. In this context, fermented taste does not refer to a single taste sensation but to a composite experience formed by ingredient foundations, fermentation durations, vessel mediation, taste intensity, and eating contexts. Supporting this conceptualization, sensory branding research has indicated that external cues such as color, form, packaging, and labels influence consumers' expectations of food taste, texture, and quality (Krishna, 2012; Piqueras-Fiszman & Spence, 2015). Furthermore, flavor perception is not a single gustatory activity but rather a multisensory experience involving vision, smell, touch, and memories (Spence, 2015). Consequently, visual elements in fermented food brands not only perform identification functions but also participate in the construction of taste experiences and local meanings.

Accordingly, we analyzed undergraduate course-based redesign works related to Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang and Tangchang fermented tofu as cases to evaluate how both Sichuan fermented foods form differentiated visual identities through logos, colors, auxiliary graphics, packaging, and narrative images. Cultural representation theory posits that meaning does not naturally reside in things themselves but is produced through images, words, and symbolic systems (Hall, 1997). Complementing this, visual grammar theory further suggests that image meanings are also related to visual organization, including information value, salience, and framing relations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Drawing on both frameworks, we advance the discussion of local food brand image design from the use of regional symbols to the visual organization of food experiences. Through a comparison of the two cases, we analyze how taste experiences, production processes, and everyday memories are transformed into brand identities, while summarizing two regional identity pathways: craft-authority-based and domestic-memory-based. This comparison helps to explain more specifically the visual mechanisms through which locality is generated in traditional food brand image design.

2. Theoretical Perspective and Analytical Framework

Research on local food brands has shifted from packaging renewal and visual image beautification toward discussions of the relationships among food cultural heritage, sensory experiences, brand identities, and regional identities. The brand value of traditional foods does not come merely from the product itself; it also derives from production techniques, vessel experiences, dietary habits, collective memories, and related dimensions. Given this complexity, the key issue in the brand image design of Sichuan *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu is not the simple use of local elements, but how fermentation experiences can be transformed into a recognizable visual identity.

In this study, we define "brand identity" as a broad concept referring to the identifying features, value positioning, and cultural temperament formed by a brand within a visual system. "Regional identity" refers to the locality-related dimension within brand identity, emphasizing how a brand links food experiences with Sichuan regional culture through a visual system. In other words, regional identity is not synonymous with

brand identity; rather, it is the part of brand identity related to local origin, local experiences, and local imaginations.

2.1 Local Food Brands: From Packaging Renewal to Food Cultural Heritage

For traditional food brands, if visual renewal remains at the level of packaging appearance, local culture can easily be reduced to a decorative resource. Therefore, by incorporating process logic and everyday contexts into the brand system, local foods can establish a more stable cultural identity.

Within the Chinese design research context, a substantial body of discussion has emerged around the renewal of time-honored brands, intangible cultural heritage products, and regional food brands. Zheng's (2016) study of brand image design for Chinese time-honored brands pointed out that such brands are not merely commercial brands but also carriers of urban memories, traditional craftsmanship, and cultural emotions. Notably, when brands from similar regions repeatedly use similar historical symbols and regional images, brand differentiation may paradoxically be weakened. Zhu and Qiu (2025), in their study of brand visual image design for Hainan regional cultural heritage, argued that regional cultural brand design needs to move beyond the superficial transplantation of cultural symbols to establish deeper connections among cultural experiences, user needs, and communication scenarios. Similarly, Li and Zhang's (2020) study of "BoBo Fried" indicated that the branding of regional culture is not merely a tool for generating superficial local interest; instead, it requires reconstructing visual order while retaining the atmosphere of neighborhood and street life.

Complementing this domestic scholarship, international research on food cultural heritage has indicated that traditional food is not merely a consumer product. For example, Bessière (1998) noted that traditional food and local culinary practices can serve as essential expressions of regional identity and cultural heritage. Sims (2009) similarly argued that the appeal of local food lies precisely in its ability to connect place, culture, and experiences of authenticity. Furthermore, food, dining, and gastronomy are often used in place branding; they not only provide consumption experiences but also participate in the construction of place images and regional identities (Berg & Sevón, 2014).

From this perspective, the visual renewal of Sichuan fermented food brands should not be understood merely as an improvement in packaging form. It should instead be examined within the relationships among local techniques, eating practices, and cultural memory. Although existing studies provide a foundation for understanding the cultural transformation of local food brands, discussion remains insufficient regarding how taste experiences participate in brand visual construction. For *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu, locality is not composed merely of origin labels or regional motifs; rather, it is gradually generated through fermentation processes, vessel experiences, and everyday eating practices.

2.2 Visual Representation: Brand Images as Systems of Meaning Production

Hall's (1997) theory of cultural representation argues that meaning does not naturally exist in things themselves but is produced through images, words, and symbolic systems. In brand design, graphics, typefaces, colors, and packaging are not neutral formal decorations; they are media that participate in the construction of brand meaning. Visual elements such as broad beans, chilies, earthenware jars, character imagery, and red or warm brown color palettes do not inherently represent authenticity or domesticity. Only after they enter specific brand contexts and form relationships with text, composition, and application scenarios do they generate corresponding meanings.

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of visual grammar further suggests that images organize meaning through composition, salience, color, framing, and information structure. From this perspective, the vessels, colors, and character imagery in fermented food brands are not merely direct copies of local culture. Their position, size, color

intensity, boundary relations, and combinations with text all affect viewers' viewing sequence and meaning judgments.

Packaging design research has shown that the overall visual form of packaging affects consumers' impressions and judgments of brands (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). For example, whether an earthenware jar is placed at the visual center influences whether viewers understand it as a core clue to the production process. Whether red becomes the dominant hue affects whether the brand is first recognized as expressing "intense Sichuan flavor." In addition, whether characters and vessels are placed within the same narrative frame affects whether the brand can be understood as oriented toward domesticity and emotional memories. Therefore, the grammatical relationships among visual elements become the primary mechanism through which "fermented taste" is transformed into regional identity.

2.3 Sensory Branding: Visualizing Fermented Taste

The core experience of a food brand first occurs at the level of taste. However, taste cannot be directly seen; it can only be indirectly evoked through color, graphics, texture, vessels, materials, and words. Krishna's (2012) study of sensory marketing demonstrated that sensory stimuli influence consumers' perception, judgment, and behavior. Research on crossmodal associations also indicates that visual cues affect people's expectations of taste, texture, and product attributes. Spence (2015) further emphasized that flavor perception is characterized by multisensory integration. Piqueras-Fiszman and Spence (2015) demonstrate that product-extrinsic cues such as packaging, color, form, and labels influence consumers' judgments of food taste, texture, and quality.

Consequently, visual elements in food brands are not only identification tools but also participate in the pre-construction of taste experiences. The colors and forms of food packaging influence consumers' sensory expectations, and packaging color and shape further affect consumers' expectations, preferences, and purchase intentions toward food (Ares & Deliza, 2010). In food packaging design, color is particularly likely to function as a taste cue. Red, deep reddish-brown (sauce red), and orange-red are easily associated with chili peppers, red oil, sauce aroma, and intensity, whereas warm brown, beige, and terracotta more readily evoke warmth, simplicity, craftsmanship, and domesticity.

In this context, the "fermented taste" discussed in this study is not merely a taste judgment made by the consumer, nor is it an image-based correspondence with sensory words such as spicy, fragrant, salty, or savory in packaging design. It is better understood as an experiential structure formed by material transformation, temporal sedimentation, vessel mediation, and everyday use. The specificity of fermented foods lies in the fact that product value is not fully visible in the final product but is embedded in continuous processes such as ingredient selection, jar pickling, sunning and stirring, storage and waiting, and table use. Thus, "fermented taste" includes not only perceivable taste intensity but also process credibility, temporal depth, and everyday memories. It is in this sense that the brand visual system functions: it does not directly reproduce taste, but transforms invisible and intangible fermentation experiences into a visible, recognizable, and transmittable regional identity through graphics, colors, vessels, characters, and narrative scenes.

2.4 Regional Identity and Brand Authenticity: Locality as Relational Construction

Kavaratzis and Ashworth's (2005) research on place branding pointed out that place brand management involves organizing and guiding people's cognitive images of places. Locality is not merely the marking of a geographical name or administrative area; rather, it is a relationship continuously constructed among products, symbols, narratives, experiences, and social cognition.

For local food brands, regional identity is not a simple statement of where the products originate but a visual explanation of why they belong here. As used in this study,

regional identity first refers to local imaginations and cultural positioning at the level of brand visuals. It is not equivalent to regional identification already accepted by consumers; whether consumers truly accept such an identity would require further verification through interviews, questionnaires, and related methods.

Brand authenticity is not the result of unilateral brand claims; it is constructed among historical continuity, process credibility, local origin, and consumer perception. Beverland's (2005) study of wine brands shows that tradition, place of origin, craftsmanship, and narrative are important resources for shaping brand authenticity. Napoli et al. (2014) also point out that consumers rely on brand cues to judge authenticity. In local food consumption, authenticity often becomes an important cue by which consumers judge brand value, and regional food consumption is closely related to consumers' pursuit of brand authenticity (Riefler, 2020). In the case of fermented foods, earthenware jars, brewing time, craftsmanship, and eating scenarios are precisely the visualized presentation of such authenticity cues. *Doubanjiang* brands tend to construct authenticity through process cues, whereas fermented tofu brands tend to construct emotional authenticity through everyday-life cues.

2.5 Research Gap and Analytical Framework

Existing studies have provided a foundation for understanding local food brands from the perspectives of food cultural heritage, visual representation, sensory branding, place branding, and brand authenticity. However, current discussions still focus more on the extraction and application of regional symbols, traditional patterns, and packaging styles, while insufficiently explaining how food experience is transformed into regional identity through visual systems.

This issue is particularly evident in fermented food brands. The locality of *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu is not expressed only through the label "Sichuan" or regional images; it is generated through factors such as fermentation processes, taste changes, and everyday eating scenarios. Therefore, the key issue that brand design needs to explain is not how local elements are used decoratively, but how "fermented taste" is organized as a recognizable visual identity.

To address this gap, this study takes "fermented taste" as the core concept connecting food experience and brand identity, and it forms an analytical framework of food experience—visual translation—regional identity. The food experience layer focuses on ingredient foundations, fermentation time, vessel mediation, taste intensity, and eating contexts. The visual translation layer analyzes how logos, auxiliary graphics, standard colors, packaging, and narrative images organize these experiences through information value, salience, and framing relations. The regional identity layer further explains how different visual combinations generate differentiated local imagination and brand positioning. Based on this framework, *doubanjiang* is more likely to form a "craft-authority" identity, whereas fermented tofu is more likely to form a "domestic-memory" identity. These two identity paths are analytical generalizations based on visual materials, rather than fixed categories that have already been validated through consumer acceptance.

3. Research Design and Data Processing

The generation of meaning in a brand visual system is difficult to explain solely through sales, user preferences, or communication data. For Sichuan *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu, logos, colors, auxiliary graphics, packaging, and application materials are not simply displays of design works. They are evidentiary materials through which fermented foods are visualized, branded, and regionalized. Therefore, this section adopts a qualitative visual case study as the basic method and explains case selection, material scope, analytical dimensions, coding logic, and credibility control.

3.1 Method Selection: Qualitative Visual Case Study

A case study is suitable for analyzing complex design phenomena in specific contexts. The brand image design of Sichuan *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu involves local dietary culture, fermentation techniques, vessel symbols, taste associations, and consumption scenarios; its cultural meaning cannot be fully explained by a single quantitative indicator. As such, a qualitative visual case study can connect brand images, design statements, packaging applications, and local food contexts, thereby observing how visual systems participate in the generation of brand identity.

In this study, visual materials are treated as the core objects of analysis. Logos present the core mode of brand identification; standard colors and auxiliary graphics reflect the extension logic of the visual system; and packaging and promotional materials show how brand identity enters consumption and communication touchpoints. Through a structured reading of these materials, it is possible to trace the process by which "fermented taste" is transformed from food experience into visual identity.

3.2 Case Selection, Material Characteristics, and Sources

This study selects brand image redesign works related to Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang and Tangchang fermented tofu as comparative cases. The reasons are mainly threefold. First, both are traditional Sichuan fermented foods, and their product value is closely related to ingredient processing, fermentation time, vessel use, and taste accumulation. Second, the two products differ clearly in food role and cultural temperament: *doubanjiang* places greater emphasis on origin authenticity, traditional brewing, and craft authority, whereas fermented tofu places greater emphasis on the family table, intangible cultural heritage transmission, and intergenerational memory. Third, both course-based redesign cases formed relatively complete visual identity systems, allowing comparative analysis from individual logos to system applications.

It is important to note that the research objects are not complete commercial visual identity systems currently used by enterprises. Instead, they are experimental redesign works produced in an undergraduate brand image design course using two real Sichuan fermented food brands as design briefs. The two real brand names are retained in this study mainly to define the food types, regional contexts, and course design briefs. This does not mean that the study evaluates the current brand strategies, market communication effects, or consumer perceptions of the relevant enterprises. The visual materials on which the analysis is based come from students' course design outcomes. Authorization was obtained from the authors of the coursework for academic research and publication, and the materials were then anonymized, organized, selected, and classified by the researcher.

The focus of this study is not whether these schemes have already produced commercial communication effects. Instead, it concerns how designers, around authentic local food brand briefs, mobilize visual resources such as ingredients, vessels, colors, copywriting, and narrative images to organize fermented food experience into a certain brand identity and regional identity. This material characteristic determines that this study is closer to a visual case study in a design education context than to a study of corporate brand communication effects.

A total of 23 visual materials were collected, all from final works and course archives of an undergraduate brand image design course, including students' logo explanations, standard color and auxiliary graphic specifications, packaging designs, leaflets, poster series, and application materials. The materials were not obtained from official corporate visual identity systems or market campaign materials but from design outcomes generated during course teaching. After obtaining authorization from the creators of the course works, the author anonymized the relevant materials and used them as the basis for the visual case analysis in this article.

Material selection mainly followed three principles. First, the material should reflect the core structure of the brand visual system, such as the logo, standard colors, auxiliary graphics, and main packaging. Second, it should respond to the research question concerning "fermented taste," meaning that the material contains clues related to ingredients, vessels, processes, taste colors, or eating contexts. Third, the image information should be sufficiently complete to support visual analysis of composition, salience, and narrative relations. Materials that were weakly related to the research question, repetitive in content, insufficiently clear, or merely decorative were not included in the main analysis.

The specific organization process consisted of three steps. First, the course works for the two cases were initially collected to form a raw visual material database. Second, the materials were classified according to "core identification—system specifications—communication applications," in which core identification included logos and logo explanations, system specifications included standard colors and auxiliary graphics, and communication applications included packaging, posters, and application materials. Finally, from the 23 materials, three groups of key images that best reflected differentiated visual translation paths (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Table 4 in the text) were selected for analysis. The remaining materials were used as auxiliary evidence to confirm the consistency and extension relations of the visual systems. As summarized in Table 1, the selected materials are distributed across the two cases according to their scope, key images, core observations, and analytical functions.

Table 1. Scope and Sources of Case Materials

Case	Material scope and source	Key images analyzed in the text	Core observations	Analytical function
Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang	Undergraduate brand image design course student redesign outcomes: logo explanation, standard colors, auxiliary graphics, packaging applications, poster design, application materials, etc., totaling 11 images.	Logo explanation image, standard color/auxiliary graphic combination image, and the "picking chilies/selecting beans" narrative poster series.	Earthenware jar, broad beans, stirring tool, red/sauce red color system, "three hundred years of craftsmanship," "one flavor spreads across the world," "picking chilies/selecting beans," etc.	Analyzes how the *doubanjiang* brand constructs authenticity and craft authority through place of origin, fermentation vessels, process narratives, and taste colors.
Tangchang Fermented Tofu	Undergraduate brand image design course student redesign outcomes: logo explanation, standard colors, auxiliary graphics, leaflet, gift-box packaging, narrative illustrations, application materials, etc., totaling 12 images.	Logo explanation image, standard color/auxiliary graphic combination image, and the "selling tofu/grinding tofu/picking chilies" narrative poster series.	Elderly grandmother figure, earthenware vat, warm brown/beige color system, soybean/chili/bean pod graphics, "the taste of home," tofu-grinding and other everyday-life scenes.	Analyzes how the fermented tofu brand constructs domestic emotion and intergenerational memory through personified expression, fermentation vessels, everyday-life narratives, and taste colors.

3.3 Analytical Dimensions and Operationalization

The relationship of fermented taste—visual translation—regional identity proposed in Section 2 is operationalized in the material analysis into five analytical dimensions: ingredient identification, fermentation vessels, taste colors, everyday-life narratives, and regional identity. The first four dimensions are mainly used to identify food experience in the visual materials, while the final dimension is used to judge how these experiences are organized as local imagination and brand positioning. More specifically, ingredient identification focuses on raw material clues such as broad beans, chilies, soybeans, and bean pods; fermentation vessels focus on production media such as earthenware jars, vats, stirring tools, and bamboo sieves; taste colors focus on the sensory expectations evoked

by colors such as red, sauce red, warm brown, and beige; everyday-life narratives focus on image contents such as characters, labor scenes, family tables, and local transactions; and regional identity examines how the above elements jointly point to "why it belongs to Sichuan" and "in what way it belongs to Sichuan." As shown in Table 2, these five dimensions provide a common analytical basis for comparing the two cases.

Table 2. Case Analysis Dimensions

Analytical dimension	Juancheng Doubanjiang	Tangchang fermented tofu
Ingredient identification	Broad beans, chilies	Soybeans, bean pods, chilies
Fermentation vessels	Earthenware jar, stirring tool	Earthenware vat, bamboo sieve, old wooden table
Taste colors	Red, sauce red, intense Sichuan flavor	Warm brown, beige, warm domesticity
Everyday-life narrative	Place of origin, picking chilies and selecting beans, sunning and brewing	Elderly grandmother figure, the taste of home, grinding tofu
Meaning orientation	Authenticity, professionalism, historical authority	Approachability, intergenerational memory, everyday life

Material analysis was conducted in three steps. First, visual units in the images were extracted, including characters, ingredients, vessels, colors, typefaces, copywriting, and application scenes. These units were examined in terms of information value, salience, and framing relations in the image in order to determine which elements occupied the visual center, which elements were strengthened by color or scale, and which elements were organized within the same narrative sequence. Finally, the visual units were assigned to corresponding themes, and the differences between the two cases in identity construction were compared.

3.4 Coding Examples and Evidence Chain

To reduce impressionistic subjective interpretation, material analysis followed an evidence chain of visual evidence—initial coding—thematic induction—identity interpretation. The table below presents several typical coding examples. As shown in Table 3, the coding examples trace the analytical progression from visual evidence to identity interpretation.

Table 3. Coding Examples

Visual evidence	Initial coding	Thematic induction	Identity interpretation
Earthenware jar, broad beans, and stirring tool in the Juancheng logo	Fermentation vessel, ingredient identification, process action	Visualization of the fermentation process	Points to process credibility
Red, sauce red, and orange-red packaging system of Juancheng	Taste colors	Spicy aroma, intensity, authentic Sichuan flavor	Strengthens Sichuan flavor recognition
"Three hundred years of craftsmanship," "one flavor spreads across the world," and "picking chilies/selecting beans/stirring under the sun"	Temporal narrative, process narrative, ingredient selection process	Historical accumulation and craft tradition	Supports brand authenticity
Elderly grandmother and earthenware vat in the Tangchang fermented tofu logo	Personified expression, fermentation vessel	Visualization of domestic memory	Points to family emotion
Warm brown, beige, and terracotta color system of Tangchang fermented tofu	Taste colors	Warmth, simplicity, handcraft	Strengthens everyday-life atmosphere
Copywriting "the taste of home" and illustrations of selling tofu, grinding tofu, and picking chilies	Family narrative, labor scenes, local life	Visualization of everyday dietary experience	Intergenerational memory and local-life identification

Regarding the first case, taking Juancheng Doubanjiang as an example, the earthenware jar, broad beans, and stirring tool together form a relationship of ingredients—vessel—action. When these elements are combined with phrases such as three hundred years of craftsmanship and Pixian Doubanjiang, visual meaning shifts from product identification toward traditional brewing and process credibility.

By contrast, the evidence chain of Tangchang fermented tofu is more oriented toward everyday-life narrative. The elderly woman figure, the action of holding an earthenware

jar, the warm brown color system, and the phrase the taste of home jointly place fermented tofu within family memory and the everyday table. Images of selling tofu, grinding tofu, and picking chilies further supplement the local life context.

3.5 Comparative Logic

The comparison of the two cases does not evaluate design quality. Instead, it examines how fermented foods from similar cultural regions form different visual identities. The comparison focuses on three aspects: first, the selection of visual elements, such as ingredients, vessels, characters, and colors; second, the organizational relationships among elements, such as information value, salience, and narrative framing; and third, the meaning orientations formed by these visual relationships. Drawing on this comparative structure, this study summarizes the *doubanjiang* case as tending toward a "craft-authority" path and the fermented tofu case as tending toward a "domestic-memory" path. These two paths are used only to explain the differences in visual organization in the cases of this study and are not generalized as fixed categories.

3.6 Research Boundaries and Credibility Control

The conclusions of this study are based on two Sichuan fermented food brand image redesign cases, with a focus on explaining how visual elements in course-based redesign work to organize local food experience. Given that the materials come from an undergraduate brand image design course, this study does not equate them with official corporate brand systems, nor does it directly infer market communication effects or consumer acceptance.

To strengthen analytical reliability, this study adopts the following controls. First, the two cases use the same analytical dimensions to ensure consistency in comparative criteria. Second, images, copywriting, course design statements, and food process contexts are mutually corroborated to avoid judgment based on a single image. Third, information value, salience, and framing relations are introduced into image interpretation in order to explain the organizational modes among visual elements as much as possible, rather than remaining at the level of subjective impressions.

Accordingly, the identity paths proposed in this study should be understood as analytical results derived from course-based redesign materials. Their scope of applicability is mainly limited to similar contexts of traditional fermented food brand image redesign.

4. Comparative Analysis of the Visual Identity of Sichuan Fermented Food Brands

Doubanjiang and fermented tofu are both Sichuan fermented foods, but their product roles and eating scenarios differ, resulting in differentiated visual identity paths. The former constructs authority through place of origin, process time, and taste intensity, while the latter establishes emotional identification through family scenes, character imagery, and intergenerational memory. The following analysis proceeds from three levels: vessel symbols, taste colors, and narrative images.

4.1 Vessel Symbols: From Fermentation Containers to Identity Relations

The theory of visual representation suggests that image meaning is not naturally generated by a single element but is constructed through symbolic combinations and use contexts. Fermentation vessels such as earthenware jars and vats are not fixed traditional symbols in food brands; their meanings depend on the relationships they form with ingredients, tools, characters, and copywriting. From the perspective of visual grammar, the meaning of vessels also depends on their information position, salience, and boundary relations: when a vessel occupies the visual center, it often assumes the function of core identification; when it is included in the same compositional frame as ingredients and

tools, it more easily points to the production process; and when it is combined with bodily action, it more easily turns toward everyday relationships and emotional memory.

In the logo of Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang, the earthenware jar, broad beans, and stirring tool jointly form a relational chain of ingredients, vessel, and action, compressing the fermentation process of *doubanjiang* into a recognizable craft structure. The earthenware jar has high salience in the image and carries the central information of the fermentation container. The broad beans indicate product ingredients, while the stirring tool incorporates production actions such as sunning, stirring, and placing ingredients into jars into the visual system. Copywriting such as three hundred years of craftsmanship and one flavor spreads across the world is placed within the same interpretive frame as the vessel graphics, further connecting this structure to historical accumulation and local specialty narratives. Consequently, the earthenware jar is no longer merely a representation of a traditional vessel; it becomes visual evidence of process credibility and origin authenticity.

By contrast, Tangchang fermented tofu also uses an earthenware vat, but its meaning shifts toward character relations. The vat is placed in the posture of being held by an elderly woman, and the character image is more narratively salient than the vessel alone. The vat is thus incorporated into an emotional frame of care, transmission, and family consumption. At this point, the fermentation container is transformed from a production tool into a medium of family memory. Expressions such as intangible cultural heritage transmission and the taste of home, therefore, no longer function merely as historical descriptions; they gain emotional support through the character image and family scene. The same fermentation vessel forms different orientations in the two brands: Juancheng uses it to construct craft authority, while Tangchang fermented tofu uses it to organize everyday memory. As shown in Figure 1, the two core logos therefore assign different identity meanings to comparable fermentation-vessel imagery.



A. Pengcheng Brand Doubanjiang Logo B. Tangchang Fermented Bean Curd Logo

Figure 1. Vessel Meanings in the Core Logos of the Two Brands: Process Evidence and Family Memory

Note. Experimental redesign works from an undergraduate brand image design course organized by the author.

Together, the differences between the two logos indicate that vessels are not merely production tools for fermented foods; they can also become organizational centers of brand identity. Juancheng establishes a craft order through earthenware jars, ingredients, tools, and temporal copywriting. Tangchang fermented tofu establishes emotional relations through characters, vats, and family-oriented copywriting. Importantly, the difference in vessel meaning forms the starting point of the two types of regional identity.

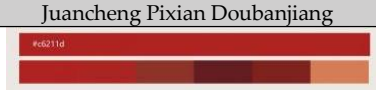
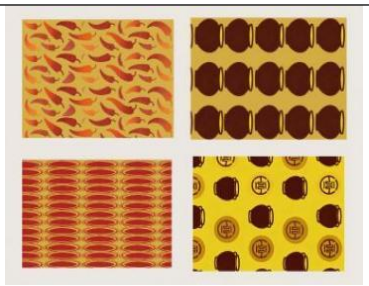
4.2 Ingredient Graphics and Taste Colors: From Product Identification to Sensory Organization

Sensory branding research indicates that colors, forms, and materials in food brands affect consumers' expectations of taste, texture, and product attributes. For fermented foods, colors and auxiliary graphics together form a sensory identification system: colors organize the taste atmosphere, while graphics indicate ingredient sources, production processes, and everyday-life contexts, transforming taste experience into visible and recognizable clues to brand identity. Within the framework of visual grammar, salience is especially important here: highly saturated red, large main graphics, and repeatedly appearing auxiliary elements can amplify a certain taste experience into priority information for the brand.

Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang mainly uses red, sauce red, orange-red, and warm yellow, together with auxiliary graphics such as chilies, broad beans, and earthenware jars, forming strong Sichuan flavor recognition. The red color system occupies a highly salient position in the image, making chilies, red oil, and sauce texture the first information to be recognized. Chili peppers and broad beans strengthen spicy aroma and ingredient attributes, while the earthenware jar connects taste experience with fermentation techniques. Colors, ingredients, and vessels are organized within the same visual frame, transforming spicy aroma, sauce aroma, and intensity into a stable brand order. In this way, the identity of *doubanjiang* as a basic seasoning of Sichuan flavor is reinforced.

The auxiliary graphics of Tangchang fermented tofu focus more on craft processes and everyday vessels. Bean pods, soybeans, and chilies indicate ingredients and local flavor, while bamboo sieves, old wooden tables, grasping actions, and jar-filling actions place fermented tofu within the context of hand production and the family table. Compared with Juancheng's use of the red system to reinforce spicy and sauce aromas, the warm brown, beige, and terracotta palette of Tangchang fermented tofu reduces taste stimulation. Multiple small everyday-life elements are placed within the same narrative frame, shifting visual reading from strong taste to warm everydayness. Its visual identity therefore tends more toward everydayness, gentleness, and craft experience. As summarized in Table 4, the two cases form contrasting sensory organizations through their standard colors, auxiliary colors, and auxiliary graphics.

Table 4. Visual Translation of Ingredients, Vessels, and Taste Colors

Brand	Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang	Tangchang fermented tofu
Standard colors		
Auxiliary colors		
Auxiliary graphics		

Note. experimental redesign works from an undergraduate brand image design course, organized by the author(s).

The differences between the two visual systems show that colors and auxiliary graphics are not merely identification specifications; they are important media through which the taste experience of fermented foods is visually organized. Juancheng forms

expectations of spicy aroma, intensity, and authenticity through the relationships among the red system, chilies, broad beans, and earthenware jars. Tangchang fermented tofu, through the relationships among its warm color system, bean pods, bamboo sieves, old wooden tables, jar-filling actions, and grasping scenes, places fermented tofu within the contexts of family consumption and craft transmission. The former turns "fermented taste" toward taste authority, whereas the latter turns "fermented taste" toward everyday memory and intergenerational experience.

4.3 Narrative Images: Process Verifiability and Everyday Perceptibility

Research on food cultural heritage emphasizes that the value of traditional food exists not only in the finished product but also in ingredient processing, production techniques, vessel use, and everyday eating practices. The function of narrative images is precisely to transform these processual experiences into visible visual materials. From the perspective of visual grammar, narrative images do not simply juxtapose several scenes; rather, they establish a reading sequence through action direction, scene boundaries, and series relations, enabling viewers to form meaning chains such as from ingredients to production and from labor to the dining table across images.

The picking chilies/selecting beans/stirring under the sun poster series of Juancheng Doubanjiang takes ingredient selection and sunning-based brewing as its core visual themes. The actions of selecting chilies, broad beans, and stirring the sauce transform product quality from a textual promise into concrete process evidence. The image series places selection, sunning, brewing, and related steps within a continuous craft frame, and viewers' reading sequence shifts from seeing ingredients to understanding production. What is presented here is not a complete life scene but key links within a production system: selection, sunning, brewing, and quality control. Thus, brand authenticity is mainly established on the verifiability of the production process.

Tangchang fermented tofu's poster series, including selling tofu, grinding tofu, and picking chilies, places the food within continuous scenes of production, transaction, and consumption. Grinding tofu points to the production process, picking chilies indicates the source of flavor, and selling tofu connects local transactions with everyday consumption. When the three are juxtaposed, the brand identity of fermented tofu no longer remains at the level of a single product image but enters the process of local life. Compared with the *doubanjiang* case, the framing relationship of this image group is closer to everyday narrative: characters, labor, transactions, and eating scenarios jointly constitute perceptible experiences of local life, and its authenticity comes more from the perceptibility of everyday experience. As shown in Figure 2, the two poster series visualize this contrast between process verifiability and everyday-life perceptibility.



A. Pengcheng Brand Doubanjiang Poster Designs



B. Tangchang Fermented Bean Curd Poster Designs

Figure 2. Comparison of Process Narrative and Everyday-Life Narrative
Note. Experimental redesign works from an undergraduate brand image design course, organized by the author(s).

These two groups of narrative images further reveal two distinct sources of brand authenticity. Specifically, the Juancheng brand strengthens the verifiability of the production process through images of ingredient selection, whereas the Tangchang fermented tofu brand strengthens the perceptibility of everyday experiences through images of local life. The former organizes fermented food as a specialized production system, whereas the latter organizes it as a practice of local living. As shown in Figure 3, these findings are synthesized into two visual translation paths from fermented taste to regional identity.

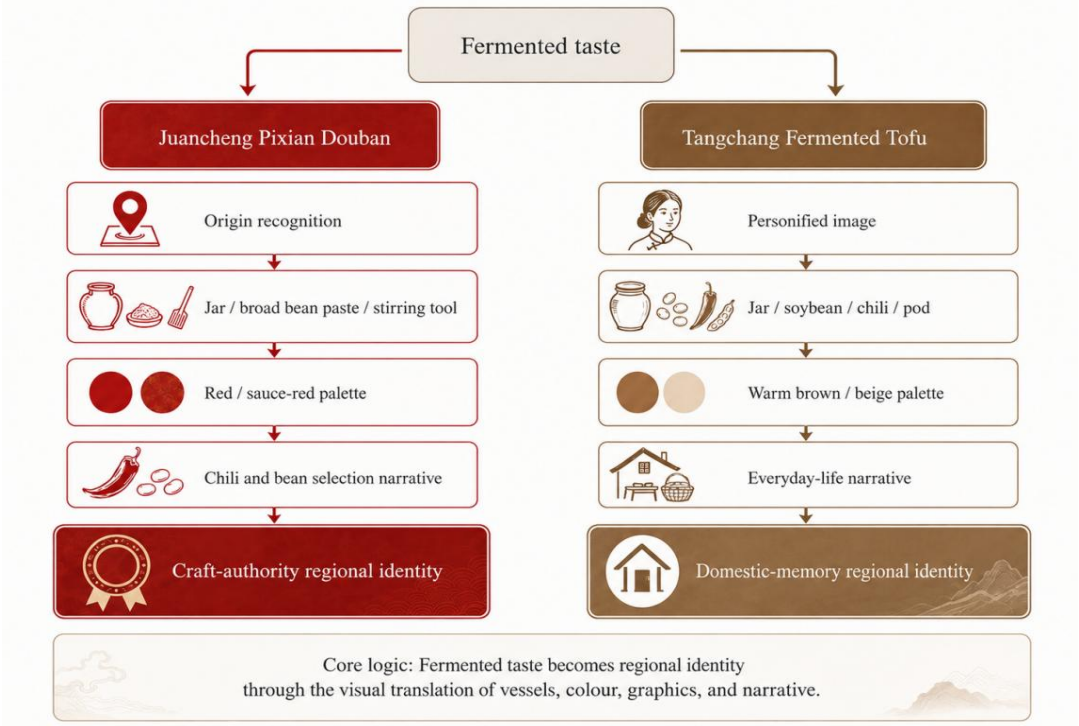


Figure 3. Two Visual Translation Paths from Fermented Taste to Regional Identity
Note. Drawn by the author(s) based on case coding analysis.

This model does not suggest that the two paths exclude each other, nor does it mean that all fermented food brands can only be classified into these two types. Rather, the value of this model lies in demonstrating that, within the same regional cultural context, the locality of food brands can be organized differently depending on product roles, eating scenarios, and emotional structures. Ultimately, both cases demonstrate that the transformation of fermented taste into a regional identity depends on the reorganization of visual media such as vessels, colors, graphics, and narratives.

4.4 Summary

The above analysis shows that the differences between the two cases are not merely differences in visual style, color preference, or graphic language; rather, they reflect different ways of organizing local experiences into brand identities. Specifically, the Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang brand transforms the production process of *doubanjiang* into a craft-based authority through its place of origin, fermentation vessels, red taste cues, and process narratives. Tangchang fermented tofu transforms the everyday eating experience of fermented tofu into domestic memory through character relations, earthenware vat vessels, a warm color system, and everyday-life narratives. To present

the differences between the two paths, Table 5 summarizes the core visual mechanisms and identity orientations of the two cases.

Table 5. Comparison of the Visual Translation Mechanisms and Regional Identity Paths of the Two Cases

Comparative dimension	Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang	Tangchang fermented tofu
Identity path	Craft-authority regional identity	Domestic-memory regional identity
Core mechanism	Constructing credibility through fermentation vessels and process actions	Constructing emotional trust through character relations and everyday-life scenes
Visual cues	Earthenware jar, broad beans, stirring tool, red color system	Elderly grandmother, earthenware vat, warm brown, everyday-life illustrations
Narrative basis	Place of origin, three hundred years of craftsmanship, picking chilies and selecting beans	The taste of home, intangible cultural heritage transmission, tofu-grinding and other everyday-life scenes
Sensory organization	Spicy aroma, intensity, sauce aroma, authenticity	Gentleness, everydayness, handcraft, domesticity
Identity source	Origin reputation, traditional brewing, process credibility	Family table, handcraft experience, intergenerational memory

The comparative dimensions in Table 5 further indicate that the generation of the visual identities for Sichuan fermented food brands does not depend on the use of fixed regional symbols, but rather on how their visual systems organize product experiences. The Juancheng brand strengthens authenticity and craft authority through process vessels, red taste cues, and production narratives. The Tangchang fermented tofu brand constructs a domestic memory and emotional identification through character imagery, everyday scenes, and a warm color system. These differences suggest that the transformation of "fermented taste" into regional identity emerges from the synergistic integration of visual elements, product experience, and cultural memory.

5. Discussion: The Visual Translation Mechanism from "Fermented Taste" to Regional Identity

The case comparison shows that the regional identities for Sichuan fermented food brands are not directly generated by a single local symbol. Rather, this identity functions as an organizational framework that transforms food production experiences, taste perception, and everyday contexts into brand images that can be seen and recognized. The differences between *doubanjiang* and fermented tofu emerge precisely in this process of organization.

5.1 Regional Identity: From Symbolic Representation to Experiential Organization

Local food brands often use place names, traditional patterns, folk motifs, and representative ingredients to establish regional identification. While such methods can quickly create a sense of place, they can also remain superficial. This limitation is especially evident for fermented foods, where local symbols alone are insufficient to explain brand cultural differences.

The locality of *doubanjiang* comes from its relationship with Sichuan cuisine flavor profiles, Pixian origin, and traditional brewing. The locality of fermented tofu comes more from family side dishes, craft experience, and everyday memory. Both belong to Sichuan fermented foods, but the ways they are viewed and understood differ. The redesign scheme for Juancheng Doubanjiang emphasizes the production process. Earthenware jars, broad beans, stirring tools, and the red color system jointly point to authentic Sichuan flavor and traditional craftsmanship. The redesign scheme for Tangchang fermented tofu emphasizes everyday-life relations. The elderly woman figure, earthenware vat, warm color system, and everyday-life illustrations bring fermented tofu closer to the family table and intergenerational memory.

Therefore, regional identity is not a simple superimposition of local symbols. It is formed after product experience has been reorganized by the visual system. *Doubanjiang*

tends toward craft order, while fermented tofu tends toward everyday memory. This difference constitutes the core identity distinction between the two cases.

5.2 Visual Translation: Craft-Authority and Domestic-Memory Paths

The two cases present two different visual translation paths. Juancheng Doubanjiang is closer to the craft-authority path. Its visual system is mainly based on origin, ingredient selection, brewing, and temporal accumulation. The earthenware jar indicates the fermentation container, broad beans and chilies indicate ingredient sources, and the red color system reinforces expectations of spicy and intense taste. Copywriting and images such as three hundred years of craftsmanship, picking chili peppers, and selecting beans further emphasize the reliability of the production process. Tangchang fermented tofu is closer to the domestic-memory path. It establishes familiarity through characters, vessels, and everyday life scenes. The elderly woman's figure introduces a family narrative, and the earthenware vat becomes a medium of craft experience and family memory. Warm brown, beige, and everyday life illustrations weaken taste stimulation, allowing fermented tofu to be understood as gentle, everyday, and approachable.

It can therefore be seen that the visual translation of fermented foods is not a simple correspondence between taste and graphics; rather, it concerns how design determines visual focus. *Doubanjiang* emphasizes whether the method is reliable, while fermented tofu emphasizes whether the experience is familiar. The former forms craft authority, and the latter forms domestic memory.

5.3 Visual Grammar: Generative Rules of Experiential Organization

From the perspective of visual grammar, experiential organization is not an abstract judgment but is achieved through information value, salience, and framing relations. Information value determines what viewers see first and understand afterward. Salience determines which elements are amplified into core brand cues. Framing relations determine whether ingredients, vessels, characters, copywriting, and scenes are understood as independent decorations or as components of the same brand narrative.

In the Juancheng case, the visual center is often concentrated on the earthenware jar, broad beans, stirring tool, and red color system, so viewers first receive information about the fermentation process and Sichuan flavor intensity. In the Tangchang fermented tofu case, character imagery, earthenware vats, the warm color system, and everyday-life illustrations are incorporated into a strong family narrative frame, so the brand temperament is interpreted as everyday domestic experience and local life. Thus, the translation of fermented taste into regional identity is not merely a matter of element selection but also of organizing visual hierarchy and meaning relations.

5.4 Theoretical Advancement: From Cultural Symbol Application to Sensory Experience Organization

Existing local food brand designs often use place names, traditional patterns, folk symbols, and representative ingredients to establish regional identification. While these elements can provide a basic sense of place, they risk reducing local culture to mere decoration. This limitation is particularly acute for fermented foods, where brand locality does not come only from visible symbols; it also comes from ingredient processing, fermentation time, production vessels, taste experience, and eating scenarios.

Therefore, the visual organization emphasized in this study does not mean simply placing local elements into packaging images. Rather, it examines how visual systems transform sensory experience, production processes, and everyday memory into brand identity. The *doubanjiang* case shows that ingredient selection, brewing, fermentation vessels, and intense taste can be organized as "craft authority." The fermented tofu case shows that character imagery, family scenes, and intergenerational memory can be

organized as "domestic memory." The former emphasizes credibility, while the latter emphasizes closeness.

Accordingly, research on local food brand image design can move from the extraction and application of regional symbols toward the visual organization of food experience. For fermented foods, sensory experience, fermentation techniques, and everyday memory are not merely background materials attached to visual symbols; they are important foundations for the generation of regional identity.

6. Conclusion

The brand image redesign cases related to Juancheng Pixian Doubanjiang and Tangchang fermented tofu show that the "fermented taste" of traditional Sichuan fermented foods does not automatically translate into regional identity; rather, it must be organized through a visual system. The relationships among ingredients, vessels, colors, graphics, copywriting, and narrative images jointly influence how a brand is understood. The doubanjiang case places greater emphasis on origin reputation, fermentation techniques, and taste intensity, thereby forming a visual identity that tends toward the "craft-authority" path. By contrast, the fermented tofu case relies on character imagery, everyday-life scenes, and intergenerational memory, thereby forming a visual identity that tends toward the "domestic-memory" path. The differences between the two cases indicate that there is no single regional mode of expression for Sichuan fermented food brands; instead, brand identity changes according to product roles, eating contexts, and modes of visual organization.

This study advances the discussion of local food brand image design from the application of regional symbols to the visual organization of food experience. For fermented foods, locality is not limited to the presentation of place names, chili peppers, traditional patterns, or folk motifs; it is also embedded in ingredient processing, fermentation time, vessel media, taste experience, and everyday consumption. The role of visual design is precisely to transform these experiences, which are difficult to observe directly, into recognizable brand images. Drawing further on information value, salience, and framing relations, this study demonstrates that visual elements do not function in isolation; rather, they jointly generate meaning through pictorial hierarchy and narrative relationships. Accordingly, the regional identity of traditional food brands should not be understood as a simple superimposition of local symbols, but as the result of the interaction among food experience, sensory memory, and visual structure.

It should be noted that this study still has clear boundaries. First, the research sample includes only two redesign cases related to Sichuan fermented foods, both of which come from relatively similar cultural regions. Therefore, the findings are more suitable for explaining the visual translation logic of similar traditional fermented food brands and cannot be directly generalized to all local food brands. Second, the materials analyzed in this study are experimental redesign works produced in an undergraduate brand image design course. They are not official visual identity systems currently used by enterprises, nor can they represent actual market communication effects. Therefore, the "craft-authority" and "domestic-memory" paths proposed in this article should be understood as visual identity paths inductively derived from course-based redesign materials, rather than as final judgments on the market images of the two commercial brands. Finally, this study is based primarily on the analysis of visual materials and has not yet examined consumer reception. Whether these visual paths can be recognized by consumers as "authentic Sichuan flavor" or "family memory" remains to be verified. Future research may combine consumer interviews, questionnaire surveys, eye-tracking experiments, and real commercial communication data, and may further introduce cases of traditional food brands from different regions, in order to examine the recognition effects, communication effectiveness, and applicability boundaries of different visual identity paths.

Funding: This research was supported by the Mianyang Teachers' College talent introduction/doctoral start-up fund project "Brand Image Design Research" [Grant No. QD2025A028].

Acknowledgments: The author(s) thank the undergraduate design students who provided course-based brand redesign works. These works offered important visual materials for the case analysis in this article. The visual systems discussed in the article are used as experimental course-based redesign outcomes and do not represent commercial visual identity systems currently used by the relevant enterprises.

Institutional Review Board Statement: This study was conducted in accordance with the relevant norms of educational research institutions. All visual materials were generated in regular course design activities and were anonymized before being used for research. The brand names retained in the article are used only to explain the design briefs, food types, and regional contexts. The study does not involve students' personal identities, grade evaluation, or identifiable information, nor does it collect consumers' personal data. This study is a text and image analysis of anonymized coursework, and the risk to participants is extremely low. According to applicable institutional regulations, formal ethics review was not required.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The visual materials on which the findings of this study are based consist of anonymized coursework generated in regular educational activities and require protection of students' work rights; therefore, they are not publicly released at present. With institutional approval and in compliance with anonymization and teaching ethics requirements, reasonable requests may be directed to the corresponding author.

AI Use Disclosure Statement: During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used ChatGPT to assist with language polishing and to enhance clarity of expression. The author(s) reviewed, edited, verified, and approved all AI-assisted content and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and ethical compliance of the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) declare no conflicts of interest.

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