

Countermeasures for Developing the Wuyi Rock Tea Industry in Fujian Province in the Post-COVID-19 Era

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As a famous variety of oolong tea in Fujian Province, Wuyi Rock Tea enjoys high brand recognition nationwide for its unique field and complex tea-making process. However, the production and sales of tea commodities were significantly affected by the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. The market for Wuyi Rock Tea was hit heavily by consumers' reduced income and the closure of small and medium-sized enterprises. In response to the problems of Wuyi Rock Tea, it proposes countermeasures from the perspectives of cultivation, tea-making processes, market expansion, and brand promotion.

Keywords: Wuyi Rock Tea, the post-COVID-19 era, industrial development countermeasure research

INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out globally. The production and trade of tea commodities have been significantly affected since the spread of the pandemic (Yang, 2022). The pandemic caused a massive blow to the Wuyi Rock tea industry in Fujian Province, with tea enterprises and farmers experiencing near-zero tea sales in early 2020. With the improved prevention and control of the pandemic, the tea market recovered slowly (Zhan, Song et al., 2021). It brought significant loss to the Wuyi Rock tea industry. The CPC Central Committee and government departments attach great importance to developing the Wuyi Rock tea industry. In 2020, Wuyishan City introduced the Action Plan for the High-Quality Development of the Tea Industry in Wuyishan City. The Plan specifies that the municipal Party committee and the municipal government of Wuyishan City will develop the whole industrial chain. It also highlights the implementation of the action strategies for cultivating leading tea companies, enhancing their quality, controlling standards, building tea brands, marketing and integrating their development with other industries.

On March 22, 2021, General Secretary Xi Jinping inspected the ecological tea farm of Yanzike in Xingcun Town to check the growth of spring tea and learn about the development of the local tea industry. He noted that Wuyishan is a place of natural treasure with a long history of tea culture. It has developed a vibrant tea industry with a favorable climate, obvious advantages of tea resources, and technology support. Thus, the tea industry in Wuyishan should be further improved, consolidated and sustained. The tea industry, culture and technology should be integrated to serve rural revitalization (Ye, 2021). In this context,

it is crucial to study the difficulties of the Wuyi Rock Tea industry in the post-COVID-19 era to explore feasible ways to regulate production further, enhance brand awareness, and increase sales in China and abroad. This study attempts to analyze the impact of the pandemic on the Wuyi Rock Tea industry from its production, distribution, and consumers. In addition, it investigates multiple cases of Wuyi Rock Tea companies that have responded to the pandemic. Finally, based on the analysis results, it proposes specific countermeasures for the problems in the current development of Wuyi Rock Tea.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As one of the well-known tea varieties in China, Wuyi Rock Tea has been studied by scholars in China, mainly from the following aspects.

First, it is studied from the perspective of tea production. Weng et al. (2022) examined the continuation of the traditional charcoal-roasting process and the evolution of the applicability of modern production equipment. Based on this, they investigated the production process of Wuyi Rock Tea in the present day by inheriting the ancient processes. Chen (2022) analyzed the advantages of Wuyi Rock Tea in cultivation and studied the detailed cultivation methods for its production. Zheng (2022) argued that the diverse processing processes of Wuyi Rock Tea are the determinant of the unique flavor of the tea. Therefore, he investigated the factors of withering and fine manipulation on tea quality.

Second, it is studied from the perspective of tea sales. Huang et al. (2016) analyzed the current production status of the Wuyi Rock tea industry, as well as the supply, demand, monetary, and information factors that affect the price changes of Wuyi Rock Tea. They concluded that the price of tea should be stabilized from the perspectives of labor cost and industry scale. Chen (2019) found from a consumer survey that consumers were more satisfied with the quality of the product and its packaging but were less aware of the Wuyi Rock Tea culture. Wu & Chen (2022) analyzed the current status of production, distribution, and dissemination of Wuyi Rock Tea in key production areas. They emphasized the internal mechanism of promoting Wuyi Rock Tea from the conceptual to the operational level in the cultural, social and historical contexts. Wang & Tian (2022) conducted participant observation of premium Wuyi Rock Tea consumers using ethnographic research methods. They argued that these consumers consume tea conspicuously to showcase their economic, cultural and social capital.

Third, the tea industry is studied from a macro perspective after the pandemic. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, some scholars have analyzed the impact of the pandemic on global trade and the supply chain of agricultural products (Josef, 2020; Li et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2020). They suggested that global agricultural products would be in short supply, and the prices of agricultural products would stop falling or even rise. Also, the international agricultural trade would be severely disrupted by restrictive measures. Xu & Sun (2021) analyzed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on a country's agriculture from the production and marketing perspective. As tea is one of China's most important agricultural products, Hu et al. (2020) addressed the impact of the pandemic on tea production and marketing in China.

After the COVID-19 pandemic, scholars mainly analyzed the impact of the pandemic on the global tea market from an industrial perspective due to special circumstances. Moreover, many studies have been conducted on strategies to enhance the export competitiveness of the Chinese tea industry. Moreover, many studies have been conducted on strategies to enhance the export competitiveness of the Chinese tea industry. These studies analyze the whole tea industry from the macro level, but few studies focus on a specific variety of tea. From the available literature, the research results are mainly focused on the production and marketing of Wuyi Rock Tea. Wuyi Rock Tea is produced in limited quantity and at a high price and is affected heavily by the pandemic. However, there is little research on its difficulties and countermeasures after the pandemic. This study will investigate and analyze the producers, distributors and consumers of Wuyi Rock Tea and propose solutions to the problems and difficulties arising after the pandemic.

HISTORY OF WUYI ROCK TEA

In the northwestern part of Fujian Province, Wuyi Mountain is a World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site at the junction of Fujian and Jiangxi provinces. It has preserved the most typical, complete and most significant area of native forest ecosystem in the middle subtropical zone of the same latitude. Wuyi Mountain, located between 27°-28°N and 117°-118°E, is the origin of oolong tea and black tea. Its geology, light, temperature, latitude and other conditions are ideal for tea cultivation. Regarding the reasons about 80 million years ago, volcanic eruptions occurred in Wuyi Mountain. The iron-bearing rock fragments were deposited and washed by the weathering of volcanic rocks. Thus, they became gravelly soils containing rich organic matter and trace elements (Liu et al., 2020). Second, Wuyi Mountain is not connected to the outer mountains and has dense forest vegetation with a short duration of sunshine. Third, Wuyi Mountain has a pleasant climate, with warm winters, cool summers, and an average annual temperature of about 18°. Its rainfall is relatively abundant, with a yearly precipitation of about 2,000 mm. Because of its unique geographical location and blessed natural environment, it supplies suitable conditions for cultivating Wuyi Rock Tea (Liu, 2017). Tea has been produced in Wuyi Mountain for over 1,500 years (Xiao, 2013).

Wuyi Rock Tea is the most critical industry in Wuyishan City. In 1984, Wuyi Rock Tea was named among China's top ten famous tea varieties. In 2002, it was awarded the national geographical indication product, which indicates that the tea is protected by its origin. In addition, the processes of making Wuyi Rock Tea were listed as the first batch of China's intangible cultural heritage (Zheng, 2015). In 2014, the area of tea farms in Wuyishan City was 148,948 mu, with a total tea output of 1.41 tons and a total tea production value of 1.58 billion yuan. 4,800 registered tea enterprises and more than 80,000 persons were involved in tea. In 2020, the output of Wuyi Rock Tea was 20,800 tons, with a total tea production value of 2.263 billion yuan. More than 5,000 registered tea enterprises and more than 120,000 persons were involved in tea (Ye, 2021).

ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS IN THE WUYI ROCK TEA INDUSTRY IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

This study mainly analyzed the problems of the Wuyi Rock tea industry in the post-COVID-19 era. The research team collected data to understand the issues in the development of the tea industry. The methods included semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, on-site observations, and secondary data collection. The first data source is the interview data, including semi-structured interviews with key industry figures, tea enterprises, tea farmers, small, medium and large-scale distributors, persons involved in Wuyi Rock Tea research, and typical consumers. The second is various documents and reports. The research team acquired government notices, work reports, and development plans from the Wuyishan City People's Government website. The third is media reports, such as interview transcripts from the news media and published papers. By collecting and analyzing these data, the research team examined the problems of the Wuyi Rock tea industry after the pandemic.

The leading consumer market of Wuyi Rock Tea is in Fujian Province, and tea is a non-essential product of life. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the bankruptcy of small and middle-sized enterprises and the decrease in consumers' income led to the decline in the consumption of Wuyi Rock Tea. Surveys of the industry, SMEs, distributors, and consumers reveal the problems of the Wuyi Rock Tea industry after the pandemic.

Negative Impact on the Market and Brand

During the research, we learned that the sales of Wuyi Rock Tea dropped significantly compared to the pre-pandemic period due to the impact of the pandemic, both for small and large tea companies. Therefore, different enterprises are trying to sell tea as soon as possible. Some large tea companies offer low ex-factory prices to particular intermediaries who buy large quantities to boost sales. The ex-factory prices of some teas are even lower than those supplied to exclusive stores. Because of this, the cost of the same product in the market is entirely different between those purchased from particular intermediaries and those purchased

from exclusive stores. In the case of a specific brand of tea in the market (the identity of the interviewee and the particular brand name of the tea being kept confidential as entrusted by the interviewee), the interviewee said that he bought it from the inclusive store at the lowest price of 3,000 yuan per box.

Nevertheless, he bought it from a middleman at 1,500 yuan per box. Therefore, small distributors and consumers buy tea from certain intermediaries at low prices by various means. However, such a price system creates chaos in the market. Small dealers and consumers could purchase some teas at lower prices than the exclusive stores. However, they all indicated that it made them doubt the price and authenticity of the brand tea, and they could not tell whether the tea was genuine or not. Exclusive stores, as the fronts of branded tea promotion, lost most of the customer traffic. Unlike the sales methods of large tea enterprises, the small tea enterprises interviewed said that they turned to live-streaming marketing to increase sales. However, they generally collaborated with online celebrities with 10-20,000 followers due to financial constraints to market their products through live streaming. Due to these celebrities' low followers, they cannot increase sales rapidly.

In addition, the price of Wuyi Rock Tea varies widely from 1,000 yuan/kg to 1 million yuan/kg. Its average price is far beyond the price level of tea consumption in Fujian Province. In the past few years, there were high prices of tea in the market that far exceeded the cost and the average market price. The most expensive tea was 9,600 yuan for one cup (8g) and about 1 million yuan for 1kg, considered sky-high priced. In 2021, the Fujian Provincial People's Government and Wuyishan City People's Government issued relevant documents to restrict the speculation of sky-high-priced tea.

Furthermore, the maximum price of tea was limited to 120,000 yuan/kg. However, it was found in the investigation that the interviewees indicated (without disclosing the identity information of the interviewees upon their request) that a small amount of sky-high-priced tea was traded more secretly in the market. The main reason is that a few consumers are obsessed with buying sky-high-priced tea as gifts. Some tea companies and distributors continue to offer sky-high-priced tea to cater to these consumers. Sky-high-priced tea has also disrupted the market to some extent.

It was also found in the investigation that due to the high selling price of Wuyi Rock Tea and the hype of sky-high priced tea, consumers generally considered it not cost-effective. One of the reasons is excessive packaging. The research team randomly examined the packaging of 100 teas on the market. The 35 boxes of tea are packed for 6 cups (about 50g of tea leaves), 62 boxes for 12 cups (about 100g of tea leaves), 2 boxes for 2 cups (about 16g of tea leaves), and 1 box for 1 cup (about 8g of tea leaves). These boxes weighed more than 500g, and the box for 12-cup tea weighed more than 1,000g. The heaviest was a box for 6 cups of tea (about 50g of tea leaves), with the box weighing 1,800g. The weight of the tea box is 36 times that of the product. The packaging and transportation costs of the oversized and heavy box are also factored into the selling price of the tea. So it dramatically reduces the cost-effectiveness of Wuyi Rock Tea. Consumers said they could afford the high prices under normal circumstances before the pandemic. However, they could no longer afford the high prices after the pandemic due to their lower income. In the case of the tea used for entertaining customers, enterprises could afford to pay 2,000 yuan/kg for tea when operating well before the pandemic. However, due to the drastic drop in business after the pandemic, they could only afford the tea at 1,000 yuan/kg or even cheaper.

Tea companies organized many more tea competitions during the pandemic than in previous years. The tea farmers interviewed said that the tea had sold well in the past, so they did not need to participate in the competition. Tea is not selling well, so they actively participate in contests, hoping to promote their tea by winning them. Nevertheless, the tea competition, in which tea farmers had high hopes, went wrong. In November 2022, Richun Tea Co., Ltd. Held a tea competition entitled "Richun – Hongfang Tea King of Authentic Wuyi Rock Tea" with a cash prize of 10 million yuan. Richun Tea received over 6,000 high-quality tea samples (more than 3,000 kg) from many tea farmers and announced the competition results on November 21. However, many of the shortlisted tea samples were coded with consecutive numbers. In this regard, the tea farmers suspected that the organizer had a fraudulent act of underhanded operation to keep the cash prize from flowing to outsiders and to receive numerous tea samples for free. After the announcement of the incident, it had a severe social impact because of the involvement of tea farmers. Since

Richun Tea is a well-known tea company in Fujian Province, the incident led to the low confidence of tea farmers, distributors and consumers in the market of Wuyi Rock Tea.

White Tea as a Competitor

After the pandemic, the most pronounced change in the tea market in Fujian Province was the rise of the white tea market. Fuding City in Fujian Province is the birthplace of white tea. Since implementing the Fuding White Tea brand strategy, the white tea industry has developed rapidly with the joint efforts of the party committees and governments at all levels, tea enterprises and farmers. According to the Ningde Municipal Bureau of Statistics, the area of tea plantations in Fuding was 15,100 hectares in 2020, and the output of tea reached 32,400 tons, including 25,300 tons of white tea. In recent years, the Fuding Municipal Party Committee and the People's Government have extensively promoted the integration of the city's tourism and tea industries. In 2021, Fuding City also organized various events combining tourism and white tea culture to expand the popularity of white tea (Xu & Zeng, 2022). White tea offers antioxidant, anticancer, antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and resistance-enhancing properties (Que, 2022). As a result, white tea became popular among consumers after the pandemic. Eighty-one thousand three hundred tons of white tea were sold domestically in 2022, up 15.41% YoY. The research team interviewed a sizeable white tea company in Fuding. Its director introduced the development of his company and said that the era of white tea would come. Many consumers started to replace Wuyi Rock Tea with white tea. For this reason, 20 small distributors of Wuyi Rock Tea surveyed reported that they would gradually shift their sales focus from rock tea to white tea in the future.

Solutions for Developing Wuyi Rock Tea Industry After the Pandemic: Creating Medium and High-End Brand Tea From All Aspects

Wuyi Rock Tea is medium to high-end tea in the Chinese market due to its unique geographical advantage and complex process. As analyzed above, the pandemic affected the Wuyi Rock Tea industry. However, from the results of interviews, producers, distributors and consumers are still confident about the future development of Wuyi Rock Tea. Regarding the reasons, Wuyi Rock Tea is grown in a region and natural environment unique in China and unparalleled by other varieties of tea. Secondly, the process of making Wuyi Rock Tea is the most complex among the six major types of tea, with the characteristics of rock bone and flower fragrance. After years of cultivation, the brand has been widely recognized by consumers. Therefore, when considering the future development of the Wuyi Rock Tea industry, we should not consider only the problems arising after the pandemic. The pandemic is regarded as both a crisis and an opportunity. As for the future development strategies of Wuyi Rock Tea, it can take advantage of its original strengths and make holistic solutions to the problems that emerged after the pandemic. Based on this, measures can be taken from promoting cultivation, production, marketing and tea culture to make Wuyi Rock Tea a medium and high-end tea with high quality, health benefits, brand connotation and effective market operation.

Countermeasures for Cultivation

Creating an Ecological Environment for Tea Cultivation

Wuyishan City People's Government values the control of tea farms for the healthy and long-term development of the Wuyi Rock Tea industry. It imposed strict rules on tea mountain reclamation in 2008 and banned it in 2013. Furthermore, it has launched special initiatives such as converting tea mountains into forests and ecological restoration to make Wuyi Rock a national park to preserve the native forest ecosystem. However, even with strict control policies, unauthorized tea hills remained. According to the information released by the Wuyishan City Government, 1,880.28 mu of tea mountains were illegally registered in the city in 2021. In 2022, the municipal government intensified its efforts to regulate tea mountains in Wuyishan City. The public security organs launched a special operation to crack down on deforestation for tea cultivation. The tea mountains requiring vegetation restoration should be afforested in time. Old tea mountains requiring tea farm renovation must be renovated in strict accordance with the standards of ecological tea farms.

At the end of September 2022, 11,601 tea farmers and 1,683 tea enterprises in Wuyishan committed to society to ban herbicides and make pollution-free tea. It can be seen that the strict prevention and control measures have achieved specific results. However, some tea farmers are still unaware of the holistic development and do not believe that the cultivation of tea mountains will affect others. Wuyishan City People's Government must provide long-term and detailed publicity to tea farmers from various channels to enhance their environmental protection awareness in future development measures. Based on this, tea farmers can genuinely understand that protecting the ecological environment is to provide a favorable ecological environment for the growth of Wuyi Rock Tea. In this way, it can fundamentally improve the quality of Wuyi Rock Tea and enhance its brand competitiveness.

Building and Promoting Ecological Tea Farms

In tea cultivation, the main factors affecting the quality of tea are the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. The Wuyishan City People's Government has been actively encouraging the reduction of chemical fertilizers and zero growth of pesticide use. Tea enterprises and farmers are guided to use agricultural fertilizers and organic fertilizers in tea farms, and it strictly prohibits the use of illegal pesticides. One thousand six hundred sixty-seven hectares of pesticide-free and fertilizer-free tea farms were planted. Yanzike Ecological Tea Farm has been managed without chemical fertilizers and pesticides since 2018. After the spring tea picking, soybeans, inoculated with efficient nitrogen-fixing rhizobacteria, are planted in bunches among the tea rows. The soybeans are harvested and buried on site in the tea farm in September and October. Brassica rapa is sown in October and November, and in March and April of the following year, it is harvested and buried in the tea farm. Green manure crops, adapted to the Yanzike area's soil and high in nutrients, are cultivated to optimize the habitat of the tea farm with other processes. It effectively improves the nutrient efficiency of tea farms, enhances the quality of tea leaves and stabilizes the yield of tea leaves. Yanzike Ecological Tea Farm has driven the whole Wuyishan region to popularize the cultivation model of green and ecological tea farms.

To promote the development of the tea industry, the city government created an easy-to-remember jingle for ecological tea farms: wearing a hat on the head, tying a belt around the waist, and wearing shoes on the feet. "Wearing a hat on the head" means planting protective forests in the high areas of tea farms, on the periphery and around the harmful draught. It can regulate the temperature and air humidity in the farms. Two to three rows of tall evergreen trees are planted in the central forest belt. The trees may include albizzia, pinus massoniana, fir, cyclocarya paliurus, Myrica rubra and Pyramidalis. 2-3 rows of shrubs, such as Osmanthus fragrans and camellia, are produced on both sides. "Tying the belt around the waist" means interplanting shade trees and border trees on the tea farm. It aims to regulate the light in the tea farm and reduce direct sunlight. In the selection of tree species, shade trees can be planted with Toona sinensis, ginkgo, prunus, Camellia oleifera, Delonix regia, osmanthus, camellia, or magnolia liliiflora. The border trees can be produced with albizzia, Michelia maudiae, Delonix regia, Zenia insignis Chun, osmanthus or camellia. "Wearing shoes on the feet" means interplanting green manure crops in the tea farm, such as peanuts, soybeans, Lablab purpureus, sandan, and Brassica rapa. The Yanzike Ecological Tea Farm in Wuyi Mountain was interplanted with soybeans and Brassica rapa. The soybeans could fix nitrogen, and the Brassica rapa roots could activate phosphorus fertilizer. Brassica rapa is harvested at maturity and buried in the soil as fertilizer. In addition, to prevent soil erosion, the terrace walls of the tea farm should be grassed or planted with creeping crops such as Indigofera endecaphylla. In the future, Yanzike Ecological Tea Farm can be used as a model, and its successful model can be gradually extended to different tea farms. Other tea farms vary in their natural environment, such as soil. Therefore, the technological personnel reserve, centered on science and technology specialists, can provide personalized instructions to each tea farm for various tasks. They may instruct how to interplant the tea farms, identify specific tea germplasm resources and screen genes. In this way, successful ecological tea farms can be continuously promoted and publicized to eliminate the anxiety of tea farmers and enhance their confidence.

Countermeasures for Tea Making Process

Further Improving Wuyi Rock Tea Making Process

The Wuyi Rock Tea-making process involves transforming and fixing the natural properties of tea leaves. It is derived from the long practice of generations of Wuyishan tea makers and contributes significantly to the quality of rock tea. The Wuyi Rock Tea making process originated in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, with complicated procedures and sophisticated craftsmanship. Moreover, the traditional Wuyi Rock Tea making process combines inherited and innovative methods passed down from generation to generation by tea makers (Huang, 2012). The Wuyi Rock Tea-making process involves the most procedures and the highest requirements for operations among China's six significant types of tea (Sun, 2022). The Wuyishan City People's Government has permanently attached great importance to the training of tea technicians. In May 2006, the Wuyi Rock Tea-making process was included in China's first national intangible cultural heritage list. The Wuyishan City People's Government then appraised 18 inheritors of that intangible heritage in two batches. 2018 18 inheritors attended the 1st Conference on Wuyi Rock Tea (Dahongpao) Traditional Tea Making Techniques. In 2022, 48 inheritors participated in the 2nd Summing Up Meeting and Symposium for Young Tea Makers of the Wuyi Rock Tea (Dahongpao) Traditional Tea Making Techniques. It has further expanded the team of tea-making inheritors. Also, it has positively demonstrated and led the way for transmitting and promoting the Wuyi Rock Tea (Dahongpao) traditional tea-making process as an intangible cultural heritage item.

However, the Wuyi Rock Tea-making process must also rely on more talent. First, policies can be introduced to improve the professional skills of tea makers, especially young ones. Training can be provided to them to meet their specific needs, including proficient knowledge of tea making. Second, activities such as vocational skills competitions in tea art should be organized regularly to improve further the vocational skills and employability of people working in the tea industry in Wuyishan City. Moreover, it should accelerate the cultivation of sufficient tea makers with reasonable structure and excellent quality to improve the quality of Wuyi Rock Tea.

Countermeasures for Marketing

Changing Consumers' Stereotypical Perception of Wuyi Rock Tea

Wuyishan City People's Government can promulgate relevant regulations to stipulate the ratio of tea leaves to boxes and the maximum distance between products in the packaging of Wuyi Rock Tea. This way, it can control the packaging within a reasonable range and reduce the high cost. As a result, the price of Wuyi Rock Tea can be kept within a practical limit. Some large tea companies have already indicated that they intend to focus their product line on the price point of 300-600 yuan per serving (6 or 10 cups, 50g or 100g) in the future to lower the unit price. Thus, they can attract more consumers.

This sentence indicates the very high popularity of tea in the daily life of Chinese people. As two tea-related Chinese sayings go, there are seven essentials required for life: firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar, and tea; Chinese scholars' seven daily necessities are music, chess, calligraphy, painting, poetry, wine and tea. The former refers to tea for everyday life; drinking tea is as easy as daily dining. The latter refers to tea for humanistic purposes, as drinking tea is as elegant and refined as playing the qin and writing poetry. It is a delightful experience, from the environment and the utensils to the drinkers. This sentence suggests that tea shapes a multi-layered world in Chinese lifestyles (Li & Jia, 2018). It also inspires Wuyi Rock Tea's marketing campaign very well. Tea companies may design different scenarios for drinking or using Wuyi Rock Tea for promotion, as tea may involve regular tea drinking, socializing, gifting, and ceremonial occasions. In each scenario, tea companies can incorporate Wuyi Rock Tea's function, tea art and even the culture it represents. Then, consumers can learn about the different scenarios of Wuyi Rock Tea's use, deepen their impressions, and increase their brand awareness of Wuyi Rock Tea.

Highlighting the Health Enhancement Function of Wuyi Rock Tea

In response to consumers' health-conscious needs after the pandemic, tea companies can highlight the health or health-enhancing functions of Wuyi Rock Tea. The tea has excellent health functions and is suitable for all ages. However, Wuyi Rock Tea differs in flavor and taste depending on the variety,

production area and years of storage. Wuyishan City People's Government intended to deeply explore the value of Wuyi Rock Tea to human health, scientifically decipher the mystery of its chemical and health functions, and promote the healthy and sustainable development of the Wuyi Rock Tea industry. In this regard, it commissioned the National Research Center of Engineering Technology for Utilization of Botanical Functional Ingredients led by academician Zhonghua Liu, the Key Laboratory of Tea Science of the Ministry of Education of Hunan Agricultural University and the Key Laboratory of Subhealth Intervention Technology of the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine. They systematically studied Wuyi Rock Tea from Zhengyan, Banyan, and Zhoucha, with three categories: Dahongpao, Ronggui, and Shuixian. It covered new teas of the current year and teas stored for 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19 and 20 years. Based on this, they collected a total of more than 100 comprehensive samples of Wuyi Rock Tea from leading tea companies.

Moreover, they analyzed the aroma and taste components of all Wuyi Rock Tea samples. Animal and cellular models were applied to reveal the biological activities and their mechanisms of action of Wuyi Rock Tea. Specifically, it helps to lower fat and lose weight, lower blood sugar levels, regulate intestinal flora, regulate immunity, and delay aging. The Wuyishan government released the above research results in June 2022.

In the future, the Wuyi government can emphasize the health-enhancing function of Wuyi Rock Tea. Beautiful videos and animations can be produced to give full play to the health-related benefits of Wuyi Rock Tea. Moreover, it can invite well-known top anchors and bloggers to promote the tea through new media such as Tik Tok and Xiaohongshu. In addition, the government can actively contact the traditional press and strengthen the interaction with newspapers, websites and government agencies. Based on this, it can build an open platform to disseminate the health benefits of Wuyi Rock Tea.

Developing a New Consumer Market

The youth market has become a key group for future economic development. Among them, young consumers, represented by Generation Z, are becoming a vital consumer force. Also, they present different consumption characteristics and tendencies from other consumer groups. The primary consumers of Wuyi Rock Tea used to be the middle-aged and elderly. Today, tea companies should shift their focus to younger consumers. According to popular culture among young consumers, elements such as two-dimensional culture or fans can be incorporated into Wuyi Rock Tea. It can create a milk tea brand of Wuyi Rock Tea and design a virtual mascot as a brand spokesperson according to young people's preferences. Alternatively, it can constantly interact with young people through live streaming. As a result, it helps to capture young people's ideas, changes in values, and new trends in preferences. In addition, it can enhance the ability to create iconic consumption scenarios. To attract, retain and connect with consumers, it can build more cozy items and activities that match the consumption theme of Generation Z. Also, it can convey evident consumer culture and lifestyle and increase the supply of personalized products and services. It can create more consumption scenarios that meet the consumption needs of Generation Z.

In addition to the market in Fujian Province, tea enterprises can be organized to exhibit in other provinces and cities in China where Wuyi Rock Tea is consumed, such as Liaoning and Beijing, and in central cities of Japan and South Korea every year. Consumers in these cities are familiar with and recognize Wuyi Rock Tea. Therefore, tea companies can quickly increase the sales volume of Wuyi Rock Tea through marketing.

Countermeasures for Tea Culture

Wuyishan City People's Government attaches great importance to promoting and passing on the Wuyi Rock Tea culture. It has launched tea fairs, vocational skills competitions and cultural competitions to promote the culture of rock tea. On August 21, 2022, a tea culture exchange event, "Tea Industry, Tea Technology and Tea Culture in a New Chapter: Wuyi Mountain and Rivers with Poetry," was held in Wuyishan. Experts and scholars from the art and cultural circles, tea poets and local poetry lovers in Wuyishan discussed the integration of tea and poetry in Wuyishan, showcasing the achievements of Wuyishan tea culture. Experts and scholars nationwide engaged in heated debates. With the theme of

Wuyishan tea, they recited and shared their poetry works on site and jointly appreciated Wuyishan tea poems to pass on and promote Wuyishan tea culture.

Wuyishan City People's Government has designed many activities related to tea culture, but these seemingly lively activities have scattered themes. For a better consumer experience, it must focus on the theme of the experience. The theme is a prerequisite and requirement for the occasion and can leave a deep impression on the tourists. For this reason, the experience theme of agritourism products must be decided depending on market needs, regional resources and other factors. The study tour and tourist programs must be designed with a distinctive theme. The theme is the basis and soul of the experience. A well-defined and unique piece can establish its monopoly for a long time. The theme should be followed and run through the whole design, and it should also be presented in specific detail. However, it has not been done for the tea culture and tea tourism experiences in Wuyishan.

In Wuyishan City, experience programs may be designed in primary, secondary, and tertiary industries. These programs must have a distinctive theme throughout. Specifically, experience programs can be created with the theme of "getting to know, returning to and enjoying nature." In the plantation sector of the primary industry, planting, picking experiences or study tour programs can be designed. Experience or study tour programs can be created for tea study, tea-related cuisine, and accommodation in Wuyi Mountain scenic spots in the study tour or rural tourism in the tertiary industry. In the processing sector of the secondary industry, experience or study tours of agricultural processing can be designed and integrated into the three industries to form a system. Because of this, consumers can "get to know, enjoy and return to nature" in all aspects.

In addition to the three industries, Wuyishan City should enhance the attractiveness of Wuyi Rock Tea to attract more consumers and provide them with more experiences. It may also design programs such as folklore shows and harvest festivals based on the characteristics of the experience. These programs should also incorporate the theme of "getting to know, enjoying and returning to nature" into the incidents. Thus, it can provide consumers entertainment, education, escape and aesthetic experiences. Thus, it can provide consumers entertaining, educational, escapist and aesthetic experiences. Education experience can be designed as tea leaf identification, tea food cooking, and participation in planting and processing study programs. Escapist experiences can be developed as Wuyishan specialties (food), Wuyishan specialty B&B (accommodation), forest bathing, and plant healing. Aesthetic experience can be designed for viewing tea, vegetable, or flower gardens.

CONCLUSION

Wuyi Rock Tea should be developed to promote tea culture and enhance the influence of tea culture brands, with the position of Wuyishan as a world cultural and natural heritage site. It should implement the new development concept, develop the tea industry innovatively, and coordinate the organic integration of the tea industry, tea technology and tea culture. Based on this, it can contribute to the high-quality development of the Wuyi Rock tea industry. It analyzes the problems of the Wuyi Rock Tea industry after the pandemic, from cultivation, tea making process, marketing and tea culture promotion. It should optimize the planting environment, create an ecological tea farm, improve tea making process, and train technicians. Furthermore, it should change consumers' stereotypical perceptions of Wuyi Rock Tea, develop the consumer market for young people, and create experience programs with distinctive themes throughout. Thus, it can achieve rock tea's long-term sustainable and healthy development.

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