

Will Convenience Overshadow Love and Care?

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It is intended to be used as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation.

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Abstract:

By 2015, the global market for hot beverages (coffee and tea) is forecasted to reach 10.57 million tons in volume (GIA, 2010). Tea is known to be the second most consumed drink in the world surpassed only by water. This increase in demand for tea is due to the fact that it is the most popular and low cost beverage in the world.

Modern times saw loose tea being sold in canisters or containers. Aluminised packaging was used to maintain the freshness of tea. Loose tea comes with an advantage of giving better aroma and flavour and with more varieties to explore. Arrival of tea bags was more of an accident than by intention. Tea is packed in a porous sealed bag usually composed of paper, silk or food grade plastic with string attached. The tea used in tea bags is fannings or dust tea. (Martin, 2007)

The process of preparation of tea in a tea pot was lengthier which was done in a leisurely fashion using loose tea. This indicated a flavour of affection, love and belongingness in the tea drinking session among the members. When guests came in, the host felt the effort put in preparation by this method showed more affection towards the visitors. (Shane, 2012)

Easy storage, less messy, less soggy, ease of use and disposal, time saving and allowing one to carry on with their work without stopping are few of the convenience factors associated with preparation of tea using tea bags. (Lemm) With the advent of fast paced life worldwide, the tea bag segment even though being of insignificant percentage is set to grow substantially due to the convenience offered. In addition to the convenience factor extended to the consumer with respect to tea bags the tea industry also enjoys a huge value addition on marketing tea bags to the consumer. It is a win – win for both the consumer and industry!

Drawing a parallel to the Indian market/consumers, tea market in India holds a huge potential to be exploited by the tea industry. The penetration of tea bags has not been encouraging. The opportunities existing for the manufacturers in terms of value addition and the consumers in terms of convenience and health benefits are high. This case study discusses about the changing tea consuming habits of the current generation in the face of other ready to drink (RTD) beverages.

Key words: convenience, loose tea, tea bags, tea consuming habits, tea preparation

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Introduction:

It was a wintry evening of year 1983 during the month of November in India's capital city, New Delhi. Amit took four of his friends to his aunt's house to pay her a visit during the festive season. She was extremely delighted to see them and invited all inside and showered her blessings on them. She told her daughter Seema to engage the friends in a conversation. And Amit's aunt quickly vanished into the kitchen to prepare "CHAI"¹ inspite of protests from the friends not to bother.

Indian homemade chai



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tea>

After a while the sound of pounding/grinding could be heard from the kitchen and everyone wondered what was going on. But her daughter just smiled. Within ten minutes they were captivated by the concocted smell of ground ginger, cardamom, cinnamon and other spices wafting into the living room. Unable to restrict themselves, two of them strolled into the kitchen and there they saw Amit's aunt boiling the herbs in the process of preparing fresh masala chai. They were shooed off from the kitchen and in about ten minutes each one of them were served tea with namkeen². One sip of the same and the friends could feel the love and affection in the process of preparation which enhanced the taste of the tea.

About thirty years later – Year 2010, Amit, Marketing Manager, Tea division of a multinational company along with five of his friends visited Seema's house in New Delhi. He came to meet his aunt who was staying with her due to old age. Amit had come to India on his annual holiday from the Middle East. After initial exchange of greetings, Amit's aunt wanted to serve them tea which they were also looking forward to.

Seema, her daughter volunteered to prepare tea and went inside the kitchen. She came out immediately and enquired whether the guests would like to have Black tea, Green tea, Camomile tea or Ginger tea. Surprised and inquisitive each one of them requested for different variety. Amit was waiting for the waft of smell of spices from the kitchen, but none came. Seema served their choice of tea within few minutes accompanied by cookies and sliced cakes.

1 CHAI – Hindi word for tea

2 NAMKEEN – Spicy snack

They could see a tea bag inside the cup immersed in hot water oozing out its tea essence slowly and steadily. The string of the tea bag had a label of the brand attached to it dangling outside the cup from the other end of the string. Seema kept a small pot of milk and bowl of sugar for necessary addition. The taste due to the different varieties brought in was exciting and thrilling and Amit observed that she spent very little time in the kitchen.

Tea bag tea



Source: http://www.iaauae.org/media-files/2008/05/10/20080510_C3-121600249903-Z71140.JPG

As he was driving back home Amit thought ‘Times change and with that people and consumer behaviour also changes’. He went down his memory lane and recollected the strategies he had formulated to change the behaviour of consumers to drinking tea bag tea from fresh tea preparation in the Middle Eastern market.

The voice of his boss reverberated ‘Consumer habits have changed over decades to adjust to the hectic lifestyle prevailing over the years since the time tea was discovered accidentally by the Chinese. Exposure, travel most importantly convenience is transforming the consumers from ‘CHAI’ culture to a ‘TEA’ culture.’

History of Tea

Tea as a beverage was first consumed under the Chinese Emperor Shen-Nung around 2737 B.C. Tea, which was considered more as a medicinal drink due to its restorative properties. It was an accidental discovery while the Emperor was consuming boiled water and few leaves fell into it and changed its colour. They were none other than tea leaves.

Tea Leaves



Source:

<http://www.molon.de/galleries/Malaysia/WestCoast/Cameron/Tea/images01/05%20Tea%20leaves.jpg>

Origin of tea goes back to tea bricks. After the tea was harvested, tea leaves were partially or thoroughly dried, ground and pressed into bricks. This was later shredded into thin strips using a sharp wheel in the center of a ceramic or wooden pot. These strips were used in the preparation of tea as a drink. (wikipedia.org) Tea was prepared after being toasted over fire, ground and whisked with hot water.

A Chinese philosopher by name Laozi named tea as an ingredient to the 'elixir of life' and the citizens consumed tea for thousands of years. After sixth century tea drinking habits spread to Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam from China. Global expansion happened with Chinese travellers visiting European countries like Portugal, Greece, United Kingdom and Cyprus other than Iran and Turkey.

During early sixteenth century Britain adopted tea drinking habit and the British introduced tea to the Indian subcontinent by setting up plantations in Assam by procuring Chinese seeds, planting and cultivating techniques. Now, India is the second largest producer of tea in the world after China.

Tea Plantation



Source: <http://www.indiamike.com/files/images/74/35/01/high-altitude-tea-plantation-at-top-station-near-munnar.jpg>

Americans being major coffee drinkers adopted tea drinking with proliferation of tea houses. Tea played a major role in the American revolution and Americans vowed never to consume tea as the duty on tea had triggered the war in the late 1700s. By 2009, the annual per capita consumption of tea among Americans is 0.33 kg as compared to coffee which is 4.2 kg. (wikipedia.org, 2013)

Arrival of tea bags

Modern times saw loose tea being sold in canisters or containers. Aluminised packaging was used to maintain the freshness of tea. Loose tea comes with an advantage of giving better aroma and flavour and with more varieties to explore. The invention of the tea bag in the twentieth century radically changed the tea drinking habits of the world. By now, consumers were used to the addition of milk while consuming tea. For tea to taste better, the leaves ought to be removed from the hot water at the end of a specific brewing period. This is one of the factors which motivated tea bag tea preparation. Tea is packed in a porous sealed bag usually composed of paper, silk or food grade plastic with string attached. The tea used in tea bags is fannings or dust tea. (Martin, 2007)

Americans were the pioneer of tea bags. Arrival of tea bags was more of an accident than by intention. Samples of tea were sent to customers in small silk bags by a New York tea merchant by name Thomas Sullivan. Instead of opening up and using the samples, customers infused the contents in hot water and thus tea bag was born accidentally. From the early 1920s, tea bags were produced commercially and they gained popularity due to the convenience factor it provided. Tea bags were made from gauze and later from paper. They were also made in different shapes like – round, tetrahedral and rectangular. (mrnews.com)

Consumers in Britain adopted tea bags hesitantly as this was thought to be a radical change in the traditional tea-making methods. Post World War Two, material and water shortages led to mass adoption of tea bags in Britain. Tea bags were promoted on the platform of convenience, less messy and easy disposal. It was perceived to eliminate tedious household chores on the grounds that the process of emptying out the used tea leaves from the tea pot was eliminated. As tea bag gained popularity in Britain as well, Lipton Tea Company was incorporated in the year 1915 with the patent of four-sided tea bag called ‘flo-thru tea bag’.

Tea harvest

Tea is a product of its environment like a good wine, chocolate or coffee. It matters how it is grown and processed. Hence each tea is unique in terms of body, character, aroma and health properties. (Sawant, 2013). Quality of tea depends on rainfall, soil, wind and method of plucking the tea leaves.

Major tea growing regions in India are Darjeeling, Assam and Nilgiris. To ensure freshness of the tea, majority of the tea factories are located within the premises of the endless rolling carpets of tea estates. Tea leaves in the tea estates are plucked by women employees carrying basket over their head. Tea produced by orthodox production method involves withering, rolling, fermentation, drying and storing. Whereas, tea produced by CTC production – crush, tear and curl method is used in tea bags. It is designed to differentiate smaller particles called ‘fannings’. These grainy particles are left over after higher quality grades are gathered.

Health benefits of tea

Tea contains caffeine, flavonoids, amino acids and vitamins. Some of the major health benefits of drinking tea are that it boosts exercise endurance, reduces risk of heart attack, reduces blood pressure (green tea) amongst others (Newcomer, 2012). Tea is not only an energy booster but also simply indispensable. A day goes incomplete without this beverage for many. Tea ensures that one is hydrated.

Drinking tea helps in building immunity to fight off infections. It is also known to keeping the arteries smooth and clog-free by preventing the risk of heart attack and stroke. Since tea contains antioxidants, aging process slows down (healthland.time.com, 2013). Drinking tea five times a day increases the metabolism of the consumer. It contains fluoride and tannins which helps to keep plaque at bay. Green tea helps improve bone mineral density and strength. Tea also helps maintain brain health and bone health (huffingtonpost.com, 2013).

Tea preparation and consumption across the globe

Tea drinking is associated with the socio cultural norms across the globe especially in the eastern part. (teavana, 1996). The practice of preparing and consuming a cup of tea varies from region to region. Chinese tea culture differs from the tea drinking habits of countries like Japan, Korea to mention a few. It would be interesting to note that in a place like Tibet, tea is commonly brewed with salt and butter. The English popularised tea in its colonies comprising of India, Hong Kong, Pakistan and parts of East Africa and the Pacific.

In Ireland, tea bags are brewed for an excessive period of time giving a bitter taste. Milk with lots of sugar is later added to offset the bitterness of the brew. Iranians prepare tea with herbs and drink tea by putting one or two cubes of sugar in the mouth prior to every sip of tea they consume.

Iranian tea with sugar cubes



Source: <http://www.sadaffood.com/projectGallery/TEA-GHAND.jpg>

In India black tea leaves with sugar and water is boiled in a pot followed by addition of boiling milk. This concoction is allowed to simmer for 5 minutes following which it is strained into cups.

Indian chai being prepared



Source: http://farm3.staticflickr.com/2457/4089264460_16ba09852a_z.jpg



Source: <http://pad2.whstatic.com/images/thumb/1/1e/Make-an-Indian-Tea-Step-8.jpg/670px-Make-an-Indian-Tea-Step-8.jpg>

Green tea is by far the most popular in China compared to black tea which as a rule is infused only once. Most Chinese prefer a straight infusion, with milk or sugar rarely being added. It is drunk at any time of the day, depending on personal preference. The Chinese have always been known for their teahouses, early ones only serving monks and aristocrats. (Unilever, 2011)

In the Middle East (Arabia), Arabic tea has always been a very important drink in the citizens' life. The market which was dominated by loose tea has been chiselled with the advent of tea bags to the tune of 40% over of period of two decades and more. This long period taken for the penetration of tea bags is primarily due to the penchant of the Arabs to make their favourite beverage from loose tea as a part of their day to day life. (Shane, 2012)

Arabic tea with dates



Source: <http://ak.picdn.net/shutterstock/videos/3456485/preview/stock-footage-arabic-tea-is-being-poured-in-a-cup.jpg>

Tea Industry in India

Global hot beverages market is expected to reach US \$ 125 billion by 2017 growing at 10.9% annually. (2013) As of year 2009, tea production in India was 9,79,000 tonnes. India is the world leader in consumption, export and production of tea. Having retained its leadership over the tea industry for the last 150 years it accounts for 31% of the global production. Tea production in India has increased by 250% since the year 1947. The Indian tea industry employs more than 1.1 million workers as the industry is labour intensive. With a wide variety of tea offered by India, this industry is a significant earner of foreign exchange of approximately INR 1847 crores per annum. (www.tea.in, 2013)

By 2015, the total turnover is likely to touch INR 33,000 crore as per the industry body ASSOCHAM. The domestic tea industry is growing at a CAGR of about 15%. Branded tea market accounts for nearly 55% of the total market and growing at about 20% annually. (indianmirror.com, 2013)

Tea bag industry in India

Tea market for tea bags in India holds a huge potential to be exploited by the tea industry. The penetration of tea bags has not been encouraging according to statistics. It has been indicated by industry sources that 6900 tonnes of tea in tea bags has been consumed in the year 2007-08. In the same year the total tea (loose tea and tea bags) consumption is 8,00,000 tonnes. Hence, tea bag consumption is only a miniscule 0.8% of the total.

According to ICRA Management Consulting Services (IMaCS), the tea bag industry is growing 15-20% per annum by 2012-13. This indicates that there is a huge potential to be tapped in terms of converting loose tea drinkers into tea bag drinkers and also growing the tea bag market. It should be positioned as a health drink in a tea bag format. This is due to the fact that tea companies lean progressively towards tea bags as a means of value addition. (Ganguli, 2009)

Loose tea versus tea bags

The major difference between 'tea' and 'chai' is – tea is an infusion of tea leaves into warm water and chai is brewed and boiled along with milk and sugar (Mazumdar, 2013). Chai is a regular accompaniment with the morning newspaper for most Indians. Tea is popular all over India mainly as an evening drink as well as breakfast drink. Family get-together or a college reunion is incomplete without endless supply of tea throughout the day.

This tea preparation is heavy on tea leaves, heavy on milk and boiled to milky-brown perfection liquid in which they dunk biscuits. This flavoursome goodness unofficially kick starts the day. Though consumers would like to experiment with tea bags containing myriad herbal and fruit-infused flavours, the customary chai remains an unrivalled favourite (Mazumdar, timesofindia.indiatimes.com, 2013).

The process of preparation of tea in a tea pot is lengthier which is done in a leisurely fashion using loose tea. This indicated a flavour of affection, love and belongingness in the tea drinking session among the members. When guests came in, the host felt the effort put in preparation by this method showed more affection towards the visitors (Shane, 2012). Loose

tea is so captivating and mystifying with such romantic origins and histories that it is an absolute must for any tea drinker when the occasion presents itself.

With changes in socio, economic and cultural landscape against the emergence of nuclear families and with working couples and ever growing youth population the process of preparing tea has become quicker as compared to the ritualistic process which was prevailing earlier.

Easy storage, less messy, less soggy, ease of use and disposal, time saving and allowing one to carry on with their work without stopping are few of the convenience factors associated with preparation of tea using tea bags. (Lemm) In addition to the convenience factor extended to the consumer with respect to tea bags the tea industry also enjoys a huge value addition on marketing tea bags to the consumer. And for the consumer the acquired health benefits are high. It is a win – win for both the consumer and industry!

Tea bags account for about 12% of the volume of world consumption. They have revolutionised tea brewing. Volumes are set to grow as tea drinkers go for convenience, innovation and flavours (teaindia.org, 2013). As the black tea bag segment grows continuously there is a niche market for flavoured tea bags for the well informed and travelled affluent set of consumers. Tea retailers are betting big on tea bags and instant mixes to boost growth in the urban markets as packed tea is gradually replacing loose tea.

Amit's strategy

Year 2000 - Amit was a sales man in the tea division of the multinational company. The company foresaw an excellent business opportunity with lot of value addition in promoting and marketing of tea bags among consumers. And a long term strategy was devised to implement the same. As a salesman he was actively involved in some of the major activities to convert loose tea drinkers to tea bag drinkers.

- a) **Continuous and regular consumer sampling:** A strategic place was chosen where there would be a congregation of consumers. Free tea sampling was done for consumers to taste the tea and also observe the ease of preparation.

Consumer tea sampling



Source: Amit's sampling promotion activity in the Middle East



Source: http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_7c-Xbb-utgo/S7hy5itkpSI/AAAAAAAAAOg/HCRx5gGD9H8/s1600/lipton5.jpg

- b) **Prominent Locations / Shelf space in Retail trade:** Space was taken in the retail trade in order to catch the eye of the consumer.

Visibility in Retail



Source: Amit ensured prominent visibility for the product in retail (Scanned copies of photographs taken in the Middle East)

- c) **Consumer incentives:** Consumer schemes were introduced wherein the consumers were entitled to redeem the different numbers of 'Pack tops' collected for gifts from

the company. This generated brand loyalty and also ensured continuous usage of the product. The gifts might increase in value with the increase in the number of redemption of pack tops. For redeeming 10 pack tops 100 tea bags the gift was a free box of tea bags containing 100 tea bags, for redeeming 20 pack tops the gift was a product branded pen and so on.

- d) **Affordable SKUs₄** : There was resistance from the consumer in embracing the tea bag which was totally new to their culture and way of drinking tea. Moreover the tea bag was slightly expensive compared to loose tea on a equal weight basis (gm to gm). Hence the company introduced an affordable SKU pack of 10 tea bags which can be easily purchased by the consumer without giving much thought on the price. This strategy was very helpful in converting consumers from loose tea to tea bags and penetrating rural markets.
- e) **Media Advertisement**: Consumers were educated highlighting the benefits of consuming tea and also the advantages of making 'tea bag tea'.
- f) **On pack offers**: Banding complimentary products like a small pack of cakes/biscuits free for the consumer with the pack of tea bags.
- g) **Thematic promotion**: To generate excitement among consumers about the brand and the product. A consumer had to buy the pack of tea bags, and use the tea bags. On dunking/immersing the tea bag in hot water, if an image of the car becomes visible on the tea bag, then the consumer gets the car as a prize. This sort of schemes created excitement around the tea bag / brand and also ensured that the consumer's rate of tea usage accelerated in anticipation of acquiring the prize.

Thematic Consumer Promotion Prize - Car



Source: Strategic thematic promotion implemented/conducted by Amit for the consumer to generate excitement around the brand (Scanned photographs)

3 - PACK TOP – Top lid of the cardboard box which contains tea bags

4- SKU – Stock Keeping Unit

- h) **Flavoured Tea:** To maintain the excitement around the tea bags, the promotion of flavoured tea/speciality tea like Ginger, Strawberry, Camomile, (Exhibit 11) Jasmine, green tea were introduced to extend more variety and choice to the consumers. The flavoured tea was to cater to a niche market.

Flavoured tea – Camomile & Jasmine



Source: <http://www.vitacost.com/Images/Products/1000/Twinings/Twinings-Herbal-Tea-Chamomile-Honey-and-Vanilla-070177231286.jpg>



Source: <http://www.vitacost.com/Images/Products/1000/Twinings/Twinings-Green-Tea-Jasmine-070177050740.jpg>

Future of tea market in India

"Teabag and tea powder or instant tea seems to be the product for the future. Convenience drives the consumers to tea bags or instant tea. Apart from that, new flavours and value added tea are instrumental in attracting modern customers," says Hindustan Lever General Manager, Beverages Excellence Centre (South Asia), Sanjeev Chatterjee.

Having gained the knowledge of tea and its varied benefits the consumer segment for instant tea powder is an interesting aspect to be tested by the manufacturers. This is similar to making tea by mixing instant tea powder with hot water or cold water as in the case of making Tang or Rasna drink from the respective powders. (Khanna, 2012)

Tea may not run in the blood of Indians, but it sure comes close. In India, tea rules the homes whereas coffee rules the streets. National chains which specialise in hot beverages serve primarily coffee. Though they run hundreds of cafes in all parts of India they are yet to emerge on their tea-scape. Surprisingly, Indians consume 80000 tonnes of coffee per annum as compared to tea which is around 9 lakh tonnes. (Jain, 2012)

According to Chirag Yadav, Founder Director of Chaipatty – the three-store tea café chain in Bangalore – “a tea bar (Exhibit 12) is a place where you not only get tea but also a nice sophisticated ambience in which to relax and spend some time”. It usually offers a good selection of snacks to go with the tea as well as concepts like the hookah.

Tea Lounge



Source: http://media2.intoday.in/indiatoday/images/Photo_gallery/the-tea-room-co_091611034816.jpg

Passion – My cup of tea in Delhi, Tapri in Jaipur, Infinita, Chai point in Bangalore, Tea Junction in Kolkata, Tea Pot in Cochin, Tea Centre in Mumbai are few of the tea bars prevalent in India now. Tata Tea set up its tea bar in Bangalore called Chai Unchai in January

2008. However, they closed down quoting that they were exiting the beverage retailing business altogether. As of now there are only 40-50 tea bars in India as compared to 1800 cafes. The market is still largely unorganised.

Statistics say that 74% of Indian adult population drinks tea regularly. “The youth market is open for newer beverages and healthier concoctions.” Drinking Green tea, Organic tea or any other brew of tea has become trendy. Exposure and acceptance of multiple variants of tea, especially the green tea would give hope to the aspiring tea bar owners of India. Indians are always partial towards a good chai that is served with love. If rightly tackled, it can give enormous gains in customer loyalty.

According to Yadav of Chaipatty, the only hindrance to mass proliferation of tea bars in India is the commonly held perception among consumers that the best tea is made at home from one’s own hands. “This myth of ‘how can a tea bar make tea better than what I make at home?’ has to be broken for the industry to flourish,” he adds.

Tea lounges/Tea bars enhance the image of tea from an old fashioned product to a contemporary and stylish beverage in the long term and in the process induct the good habit of having ‘good old’ tea bag tea to be embedded in the DNA of the consumers in the generations to come! (Jain, 2012)

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