

Explore How Tea Functions Experiences Affect the Consumers' Spirituality

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Tea ceremony culture is not just tea tasting, but a rich culture that involves different elements. It can strengthen emotional bonds with friends and family and make people from other countries respect Taiwan's tea ceremony culture. It can also help the local economy by improving consumer behavior. The service in experience is like an intangible good that creates a positive impression. The study looks at these points. It also examines how tea ceremony culture relates to commercialization, investment, and marketing. In Literature Review, the study shows how experience can enhance learners' appreciation and spirituality. The study uses case studies and interviews with professionals to collect expert opinions and connect them to the literature review. It hopes to add to the field of tea ceremony.

Keywords: tea function, tea ceremony, spiritual values

Introduction

Research Background

This study explores how Taiwan's tea culture is manifested in tea site and tea function activities, which are common during social events such as dinners, to help the public understand both the artistic and commercial aspects, and how to effectively promote tea site and tea function culture. As incomes and living standards rise, people seek knowledge, spiritual satisfaction, and community ties (Engle, 1895). According to Maslow's theory (1954), when basic needs are satisfied, people look for social interactions. Tea sites and functions offer chances for intellectual development, spiritual enhancement, and forging relationships with others. However, the tendency of showing off expensive tea sets and decorations at tea gatherings has altered their original intention, leading to competitive behaviors among hosts and diminishing the true appreciation of tea culture. Moreover, the investment appeal of modern tea sets, which combine utility with artistry, has raised issues such as commercial fraud, which detracts from the core experience of tea tasting (He, 2023; Kumar et al., 2022). Despite these issues, there is a trend towards restoring the artistic enjoyment of tea culture, motivated by wellness, social identity, and aesthetics (Wu & Chan, 2007). The global outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 severely impacted the tourism, hospitality, and leisure sectors, resulting in job losses, furloughs, and significant drops in income for those in tourism hotel catering (Lee, Kourgiantakis, & Bogo, 2020). These sectors sought new service offerings to sustain operations during this time (Moon & Chan, 2022). The author conducted three tea events in Taichung National Hotel and Taichung Lin Palace Hotel in 2018 and 2019. Attendees showed high interest and expectation. The growing

attraction of tea art and various experiences like tea sites and ceremony conduct come from transforming ordinary moments into extraordinary ones, often using nostalgic elements (Hamilton & Austin, 2023).

Research Questions

Finding the best way to market tea sites and tea-related events is an important issue right now. Based on the consumer experiences that were discussed earlier, such as those who spend a lot on tea and tea ware, the possible lack of attention to the main goals of tea sites and events, and the hospitality industry's reaction to the ongoing pandemic, this study asks these four research questions:

1. What tactics can be used to advertise tea functions to consumers?
2. How can tea functions change to provide learning opportunities for consumers?
3. How can we enhance the spiritual meaning by learning from tea functions?
4. What methods can help functions effectively preserve cultural heritage?

Literature Review

Tea function: Taiwan has a rich history and heritage of tea culture, with distinct features that are displayed at events like the Nantou Tea Expo. Research shows market growth potential, especially in big cities, while modern tea venues engage consumers by teaching them about tea etiquette and experiences (Weber, 2018; Zhou, Zhu, Kang, & Dávid, 2023; Liang & Lai, 2023). It affects daily activities, ceremonies, art, and has significant economic implications, including marketing that leverages geographic advantages (Chang, 2004). Taiwan's tea industry has been influenced by trade and politics over time (Li et al., 2021). The beauty of tea art enriches everyday moments and tea houses provide social and relaxing opportunities, with tea ceremonies fostering mindfulness and relationships (Hamilton & Austin, 2023; Vu, 2019; Sakuae & Reid, 2012). Tea ceremony tourism reinforces local identities and strengthens social ties, expressing cultural diversity (Zhang, 2022). Facing cultural challenges has led to creative practices, and the Chinese tea ceremony represents harmony between spirit and tools (Zheng et al., 2024; Shen, 2023). This study examines how to promote tea ceremony culture and its spiritual benefits for participants, reviewing literature on how these experiences can enhance personal values and using case studies and expert interviews to draw conclusions, thus adding to this field.

Research Method

Semi-Structure Interviews

This study uses semi-structured interviews to collect detailed and nuanced data through conversation (Adams, 2015; Evans, 2018; Boşnak, 2022). They are adaptable to complex research settings (Mashuri et al., 2022; Wilson, 2014). Content analysis will supplement the interviews within the case study of organizational research (Jauch, 1980). The content from the interviews and the existing literature will be compared to align with the research aims. Since Yin (1994) first proposed them, semi-structured interviews had become a popular qualitative research method, helping to gather and confirm rich information (Mashuri et al., 2022). They require careful planning, data collection, and analysis (Yin, 1994) and often combine with other methods to answer a research question (Johnstone, 2017). The interviews aim to capture diverse views and identify patterns for theoretical contribution (Gerson, 2020). They are mainly oral interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee. Fontana and Frey (2003) said that interviews are vital for understanding social dynamics, and they vary in structure and use depending on research goals. In-depth interviews with a selected expert group can offer valuable insights from inside or outside the target organization.

Interview Design and Interviewees

Our study first invites Mr. Lan Fangren (A), a tea expert who was director of the Tea Pottery Research Institute and general manager at Mingjian Township Farmers' Association, and who created Jin Xuan black tea. Next, we have Mr. Jiang Zhaokun (B), who promotes Kung Fu tea brewing and guides heritage tours in Taichung City, and runs Yi Yitang. Finally, we invite Mr. Ji Xincheng (C), who operates Zangpu Ancient Art Tea Set and organizes tea parties. (All interviewees agreed to share their names and the interviews.)

The discussion will cover these topics:

1. How did you first get involved with the tea industry?
2. What difficulties have you faced in the tea culture, how has it changed over time, and what do you expect for its future?
3. How should we view the tea culture, and what possibilities does it offer for the future?
4. How should people approach attending tea parties, and how can they improve their participation and learning experience?
5. How can participants progress from novices to experts, and what advice do you have for preserving the culture?
6. How can engaging in tea parties enhance spiritual enrichment?

The discussions with the three experts show the strong commitment and purpose behind promoting tea art. This includes aspects from growing tea, processing it, displaying tea equipment, to advocating for tea art, further enriched by incorporating the idea of tea aesthetics. Organizing tea gatherings that match each of the four seasons helps to increase involvement, as well as boost and elevate the spiritual appreciation of the participants, thus confirming the significance of this study.

Analysis and Research Findings

Tea parties are effective promotional strategies that meet consumer needs and promote product awareness. In Taiwan, tea parties have diverse themes that attract consumers and influence their buying behavior. Motivation is key to this approach; it makes consumers more supportive and increases their consumption, similar to how self-fulfillment and esteem needs foster personal growth. This motivation technique not only increases consumer involvement in tea parties, but also improves customer satisfaction and loyalty, making businesses more competitive and sustainable. It is important to understand tea parties and how they motivate consumers for promotion. The concept of motivation, which drives action towards a goal, affects buying intentions. Consumers compare price and quality and decide if the value is worth the cost (Xu, 1982; Monroe, 1990). Meeting the basic to advanced needs of organizational personnel or customers through systematic methods can create goal-oriented motivation, changing behavior and reaching organizational goals (Maslow, 1954). Psychologists see motivation as the force behind goal-directed behavior (Lu, 2007). Purchase intention shows how likely a consumer is to buy something, with higher product knowledge leading to more use, purchase, or consumption (Feng, Liang, & Zhang, 2011).

Talking at tea parties helps consumers learn and benefits them. In modern times, with more ways to communicate, sharing knowledge with consumers can change their behavior for the better. Clear information exchange helps people understand each other and agree on things, leading to mutual responses and benefits. Engaging well with consumers becomes an asset, affecting buying behaviors as consumers connect with the brand, creating loyalty and competitive edge. The changing corporate brand is important, as different ways of

two-way communication shape consumer interactions. Therefore, communication that is accurate and powerful helps consumers learn about tea parties, removes barriers, and closes gaps. Communication success brings personal satisfaction (Thayer, 1968) and involves thinking, acting, feeling interaction between individuals and society, making lasting memories (Liu, Li, & Hu, 2010). Corporate branding, linking organizations to products, tells customers where their purchases come from, with strong brands building trust (Aaker, 1996); it's a process of sharing messages, thoughts, or emotions through channels (Chen & Zhong, 1997).

Tea parties enrich consumers' spirit by offering memorable experiences. "Experience" is an economic output that adds value to a product or service. Customers enjoy tea party themes that stimulate their senses and create lasting impressions. A tea party celebrates the culture of tea drinking, with aesthetic, etiquette, and artistic elements. This merges spirit and experience when people connect over tea or drink alone, following ancient practices in modern times while enhancing tea experiences. Consumers get imaginative, emotional, and interest-based engagement from tea parties, which affects value perception and service satisfaction at tea party venues. Experience value, key for customer satisfaction, can differ among individuals depending on personal tastes or backgrounds but helps them appreciate life's spiritual aesthetics. Taiwanese tea ads use this to link traditional culture with sales and brand image. Value is based on personal beliefs and preferences, influencing consumer behavior. By knowing consumer needs, companies can use different marketing strategies, address acceptance issues, and create unique product identities through quality and branding. Experience value gives both tangible and intangible benefits, stressing subjective enjoyment from appealing experiences.

Tea functions benefit cultural heritage, as they are a lasting cultural activity and add value for customers. They are not only fun but also educative, keeping and spreading culture, leading to customer loyalty and more sales. In Taiwan, more people join tea art through such events. Tea parties include professional tea knowledge and its beauty, helping the tea industry grow. So, these events are vital for cultural heritage. Also, products and brands meet market needs and consumer expectations. Education is a way of passing on culture, important for all society levels. Every culture is different based on environment and history, creating ethics and living methods. Cultural assets are nationally important regardless of their looks or age.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Tea gatherings show personal and cultural qualities. They highlight the important aspects of culture through tea-related events. These events help people grow spiritually and keep cultural traditions alive. People who join these events learn more and value cultural differences. Tea ceremonies revive traditions. Taiwan's use of tea ceremony art creates more interest in its culture and affects consumer choices. Businesses offer different tea party themes to attract consumers and spread tea culture. Tea parties improve social relationships and make people more aware of culture and soul. This study's interviews and analyses show that by motivating consumers well, tea parties become more popular and meaningful over time. Sharing knowledge at these events helps consumers relate and learn more about tea culture. Communicating tea knowledge to consumers well has many benefits. It helps their taste and spirit, makes them understand tea culture better, and increases their learning.

Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

The COVID-19 epidemic in 2020 negatively impacted the catering industry's performance, indicating a need for improvement in operational efficiency. Future research should focus on maximizing the use of catering

spaces by organizing tea party teachings and themed events during afternoons or free periods to enhance square utilization. Tea art represents Taiwan's tea culture, and continuing to highlight tea as an artistic expression is crucial, with tea utensils playing a pivotal role. Tea art adapts to societal changes and integrates into daily life, offering an aesthetic experience that combines simplicity with the sensory appreciation of tea's flavor and scent. The essentials of tea brewing involve the tea leaf quantity, water temperature, and steeping time. During gatherings, one introduces the tea varieties, discusses the origin of the tea sets, shares collecting preferences without boasting, and enjoys heartfelt conversations over tea. Hosting tea parties aims to create a warm, friendly, and joyful atmosphere, and further research on Taiwan's tea art culture will delve deeper into the cultural wisdom of Taiwan.

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