THESIS

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Consumer Market Research China Lipton as a Case Study

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1. INTRODUCTION

Tea is a beverage consumed by a multitude of cultures. As a result, tea is welcomed as a prominent component of cultures, diets, and daily social interactions. However, the value of tea is based as much on its physical properties as on the social meaning individuals have given it. The way people interact with tea varies across cultures, and tea also has its own culture. From this perspective, we surveyed consumers in China, seeking their perceptions of tea in China and their thoughts on the way tea is promoted.

Tea (English) and 茶 (Chinese) refer to the cured leaves of the perennial crop Camellia sinensis (L.) O. Ktze (scientific name Camellia sinensis) that are prepared through varied processing methods (BRODY 2019; SAMANTA 2020). Tea is typically made as a liquid by combining hot water with dried tea leaves or leaf extracts. Aside from regular water, tea is the most popular and least expensive, non-alcoholic beverage consumed worldwide. Tea is currently consumed as a beverage by over 3 billion people in 160 countries and territories. As a result, tea promotes global economic growth. According to the Statista Research Department (2022), in 2020, the global tea market was valued at nearly 200 billion US dollars, and it is expected to grow to more than 318 billion US dollars by 2025.

Although China invented tea some 5,000 years ago and despite its increased production and local consumption, its teas are facing unprecedented obstacles by being referred to only by the type of processed or unprocessed loose-leaf tea (green tea, black tea, oolong tea). (CHINA HIGHLIGHTS 2021). There is a saying in China, there are famous teas but no famous brands. Since Lipton is an immediately recognizable brand of tea in China, Lipton was selected as the case study. According to the Unilever 2019 annual report Lipton's profits decreased. The brand is facing many challenges in China. Lipton's tea is usually inexpensive, so it must retain high sales volumes to generate sufficient revenue. Besides, most Chinese young adults (21-30) crave creativity and novelty. This can be seen by the way locally-developed products such as TikTok, Shein, WcChat, with their novelty and usefulness, grab hundreds of millions of users and fans on the mainland. Unilever’s Lipton, the third-ranked non-alcoholic beverage company globally, trailing Coca-Cola and Pepsi (UNILEVER 2014; LIPTON 2014) is losing this vast consumer group. Competition in China's tea market is tighter and more highly competitive, consumer preferences have changed, but Lipton has not innovated its package and products, and is less exciting for Chinese consumers. There are a growing number of competitors in China. They have a better understanding of consumers and offer more creative packaging and advanced marketing (such as HeyTea, Naixue, Luckin Coffee) (DAXUE CONSULTING 2019, China Food).

After drinking tea for more than 2,000 years, Chinese people are embracing new styles of this traditional beverage. From bubble tea, cheese-foam tea, and lemon tea to coffee-chai, the market is booming with multiple chain brands springing up across the country. According to data from the China new-style tea market report published by the CHINA CHAIN STORE AND FRANCHISE ASSOCIATION (2021), the new-style tea market is expected to reach 117 billion yuan (roughly $17 billion) by 2022 and grow to around 338 billion yuan by 2025.

China's new-style tea market has boomed in recent years, driven by the creation of innovative products. Daniel Zipser, senior partner with Consumer and Retail of McKinsey & Company, said Chinese consumers, especially young consumers, have always looked for new and innovative products: "I think there's no place in the world which has as many SKUs (product items), as many flavors, and as many variants. Many of the brands face the situation of a bit of supply demand mismatch, though. At the same time, they also see a strong uplift of omnichannel as well as delivery activities" (ZIPSER 2022).

The objectives of this thesis will attempt to develop an understanding of Chinese tea consumers' appreciation of the various aspects of the Lipton brand, as well as which marketing communication vehicles are better suited to promoting the brand. A survey of consumers (the questionnaire is included in the Appendices section) provided the data to address these objectives of the thesis and has helped to formulate valuable suggestions to Lipton and even Chinese tea plantation owners. SOJUMP, an online survey platform, was used to obtain responses to a specifically-designed survey of Chinese consumers. Users can agree to participate or not participate in the survey when they access the site. Despite being a popular surveying site in China, only a small number of people responded. For example, in some cases, 287 respondents, and in some, 308. Each table in the document will identify the number of respondents and their replies to a particular question.

Therefore, to fulfill the requirements of this thesis, we will delve into the current conditions of the tea market in China, compare consumers' insights and, examine the rankings of the Lipton and local tea brands, detect the most regarded message and media tools. Consumer responses and recommendations gleaned from this study will be presented. The thesis would have been improved had a Lipton company representative's voice become involved. However, it is absent in this thesis. The Lipton public relations and investor relations staff declined to be interviewed, stating that their firm does not offer comment to be included in non-media publications, nor did they think their voice would add anything that was not already in the media and public sphere.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

GUAN XI et al. (2018) report that China is the world's largest tea producer, consumer, and exporter. According to UN Food and Agriculture Organization statistics, in 2018 China's tea production ranked first among the world's 60 tea-producing countries, with 2.616 million metric tons, accounting for 44% of total global production. The tea estate area accounts for more than 62.1% of the world, ranking first. Tea consumption contributed to 36.85% of global consumption, reaching 2,119,000 tons, placing the country first in the world. Tea exports totaled 365,000 tons, making up 19.7% of global totals and ranking second in the world. By 2018, the total output value of dry tea in China had surpassed 200 billion yuan for the first time, achieving 215.73 billion yuan, a 10.65% increase over the previous year.

In supporting GUAN XI et al., ZHENG XUYUAN (2015) further reports that China's tea industry is significant, comprising more than 80 million tea farmers, more than 70,000 tea enterprises, and more than 20 tea-producing provinces and autonomous regions. The tea industry is a pillar of economic growth in many southern Chinese counties. Tea revenue from concentrated producing regions accounts for more than half of farmer income. It is one of the most important ways for many poor areas in China to escape poverty and become wealthy. It plays a vital role in resolving issues concerning agriculture, rural areas, and farmers and has received significant attention from state departments. In recent years, as the disparities in the central tea-producing provinces' levels of economic development, production costs, benefits, and technologies have gradually widened, tea production has shifted to more advantageous territories, and the production layout has moved as well. Between 1978 and 2018, tea plantation areas increased from 1.048 million hectares to 2.28 million hectares, an increase of 1.18 times; tea production steadily increased from 268,000 tons to 2.616 million tons, an increase of 876.1% (ZHENG XUYUAN 2015).

However, while tea plantations have spread to different regions, the tea planting area has decreased significantly in some areas. At the same time, as my country's tea garden area and tea production have expanded rapidly, many scholars have expressed concerns about overcapacity. According to JIANG YONGWEN (2019) and GUAN XI et al. (2018), China's tea industry has a supply and demand imbalance, accelerating yearly. In 2018, tea production was 2.61 million tons, domestic unit sales were 1.105 million tons, the volume of exports was 365,000 tons, overall consumption was 2.275 million tons, and 334,000 tons were left over. Based on the producer behavior model, ZHONG and LIU (2007) investigated the causes of the change in the pattern of rice production.

Between 1993 and 2018, China's tea industry grew exponentially in terms of the scale of production following economic reform and opening up of international trade. By the end of 2018, the area of tea plantations had increased 1.5 times from 1,170.7 thousand hm^2 in 1993 to 2,985.8 thousand hm^2 in 2018 (TIANZHU and QI-FAN 2017). There were three stages of transformation during this period. From 1993 to 2002, tea plantation areas did not grow significantly and remained relatively stable. However, between 2003 and 2015, China's tea plantation areas expanded rapidly, increasing by 1,585 thousand hm2. CHUN and WENCONG (2008) report that tea plantation areas shrank by 68.6 thousand hm^2 in 2016 but reached a new high in 2018. From 1993 to 2018, the output per unit increased rapidly, rising from 6,5855.21 kg hm^{-2} in 1993 to 12,2369.82 kg hm^{-2} in 2018, a two-fold increase. In terms of national tea production growth, it increased 3.4 times from 599,900 tons in 1993 to 2.610,400 tons in 2014. National tea yield changed over three stages. From 1993 to 2003 there was a minimal change range and an average annual growth rate of 2.5%. National tea production increased rapidly from 2004 to 2014, with an average yearly growth rate of 9.64%. From 2015 to 2018, there was rising fluctuation, with an annual average growth rate of 5.09% (CHUN and WENCONG 2008).

2.1. An Examination of the Driving Mechanisms of Chinese Tea Production

2.1.1. Resource Endowment

According to the above analysis, tea plantation areas in southwest China are growing the fastest. One of the main reasons is that the tea provinces in western China have significant advantages in resource endowment. Different resource endowments will determine the various distribution features of tea production between many regions. Topographic conditions, climatic conditions, agricultural population resources, and other factors will influence the geographic conditions and production costs of tea production in different regions, thereby influencing the pattern of tea production (XUYUAN and ZHIGANG 2017). The proportion of mountainous areas and the supply of agricultural labor are the two most important resource factors. The poor mountain regions have abundant land resources, an adequate supply of production factors, and a low land cost. As a result, tea has the potential to become the dominant type of agricultural output in mountainous regions, with pronounced regional benefits and development potential.

2.1.2. Social and economic factors

Various social and economic factors influence the pattern of tea production. Farmers are sensible economists who make decisions based on profit maximization. Economic factors have emerged as a crucial criterion for tea growers. As a typical labor- intensive crop, the potential cost of planting is increasing yearly, and there is a significant difference in the level of economic growth and non-agricultural employment opportunities across regions. Labor costs are soaring because of a shortage in labor supply due to competing employment opportunities in other industries. Young people are leaving the countryside for better opportunities in larger cities near their homes or other areas far-removed from their hometowns.

For instance, Zhejiang and Guangdong, both conventional tea-producing provinces, are east coast economic development zones. Non-agricultural employment opportunities grow yearly as the national transformation, and the opening-up process continues. Furthermore, and as informed by WU et al. (2020), tea picking, processing, and production require a significant amount of labor, which significantly raises the cost of production, resulting in fewer financial advantages than other industries.

2.1.3. Technical Development

Advances in agricultural technology greatly influence tea production. Improved production technology can overcome the limitations imposed by environmental factors on tea cultivation, allowing some areas with minor resource advantages to produce tea, thereby altering the pattern of tea production. In addition, production technology innovation, such as biotechnology and digital farm management techniques can help reduce labor dependence, lower tea production costs, improve tea quality, and increase the economic benefits of tea production. However, the level of agricultural technology development in various tea-producing regions is not uniform, and technology adoption by tea farmers is limited. As a result, the output level of tea leaves per unit area varies greatly across tea-producing provinces, affecting the distribution of tea production throughout China (WU et al. 2020).

2.1.4. Policy Reforms

Governmental support for agriculture will encourage tea production, thereby expanding tea plantation areas. For example, in the Fujian Province, the Fujian Provincial Party Committee and provincial government place a high value on the development of the tea industry in Fujian Province, which is worth hundreds of billions of yuan due to its rich tea history and cultural heritage, and have progressively issued "Eight Measures to Revitalize Tea Quality" and "Regulations of Fujian Province on Promoting Tea Industry Development" to ensure the long-term development of the tea industry (XI et al. 2008). This report has also been one of the most critical factors in the steady growth of the Fujian tea industry over the last few years.

2.2. Tea Industry in China: The Current Position

Tea is among the most popular beverages around the world. According to the Statista Research Department (2022), more than 6.6 billion kilograms of tea were consumed worldwide in 2021, with nearly one-third produced in China. Tea, which is processed for medicinal purposes, is thought to have originated in China. The first reliable record of tea drinking in China is from the third century AD. For centuries, tea has been regarded as China's national drink, with cultural, social, and even religious significance. China is the world's leading producer, exporter, and consumer of tea. Production reached 2.74 thousand metric tons of tea in 2020, accounting for approximately 4% of global tea production (RIDDER 2022).

Green tea, made from unoxidized leaves, accounted for roughly three-fifths of China's tea production (TEXTOR 2022). Tea plantation acreage in China, on the other hand, has been steadily increasing, with the most productive tea-cultivation areas located around and south of the Yangtze River valley in Guizhou, Yunnan, Sichuan, and Hubei provinces. Regarding international trade, China exports more than two billion US dollars’ worth of tea yearly, which is 700 million dollars more than Sri Lanka, which ranks second. Green tea constitutes the highest proportion of China's total tea exports (TEXTOR 2022).

Although Hong Kong is China's largest tea exporting destination in terms of economic value, most Chinese tea exports went to Morocco, Uzbekistan, and some West African countries. Regarding imports, China's most crucial tea import partners are Sri Lanka, Taiwan, and India, and black tea accounts for the vast majority of tea imported to China. According to a Statista survey, approximately 95% of people surveyed said they were tea drinkers, with nearly one-third drinking tea daily. While most Chinese people prefer to drink tea at home, tea shops have seen an increase in profits in recent years due to the popularity of freshly-brewed new-style beverages. Many young Chinese consumers have recently become fans of tea-based drinks infused with milk, fruits, and sometimes even cream cheese.

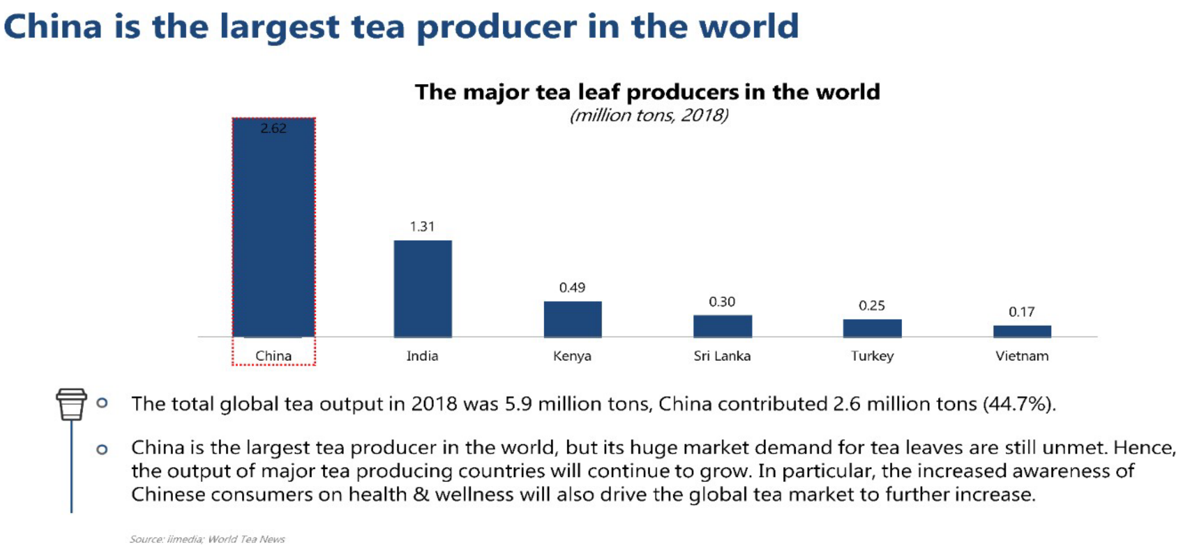

Figure 1 China is the largest tea producer in the world. (Source: iiMedia, World of Tea)

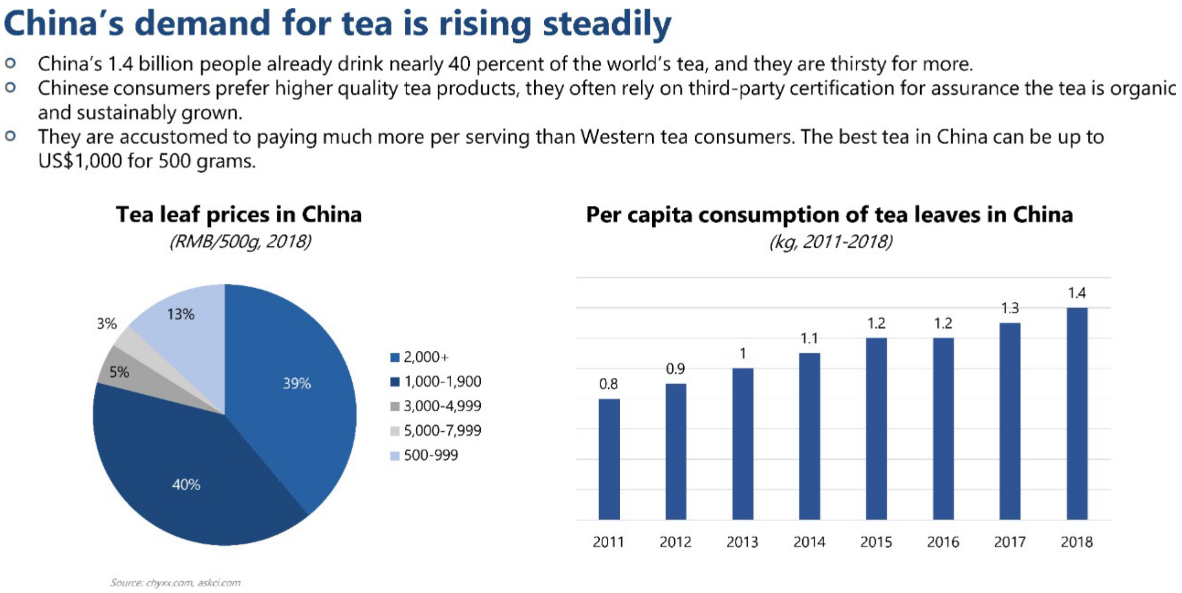

Figure 2 China's demand for tea is rising steadily (Source: chyxx.com, askci.com)

China's 1.39 billion people already drink nearly 40 percent of the world's tea – and they are thirsty for more. China, the world's top producer and the largest consumer of green tea, is now importing black tea from India, Sri Lanka, and Kenya as well as European fruit and floral teas, American-inspired tea fusions and sophisticated oolongs from Asian producers.

China's tea market is expanding as out-of-home tea drinking leads to new discoveries. Modern tearooms featuring puer cheese tea, colorful bubble tea, Hong Kong milk tea, western-style blends, teaspresso, and fusions are profiting from young people's interest in non-traditional offerings.

As incomes rise and the populations shift to higher-tier cities, their disposable income permits a better-quality tea and tasting experience. Eighty-three percent of the population drinks between 5 and 14 cups of tea daily (36Kresearch).

In 2000, just 4% of China's population was considered middle class. In 2018, that cohort rose to 30%. McKinsey& Company, which defines middle class household earnings as $9,000-$34,000 per year, predicts the proportion of middle-class Chinese will increase to 76% of households by 2022 (ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT 2019).

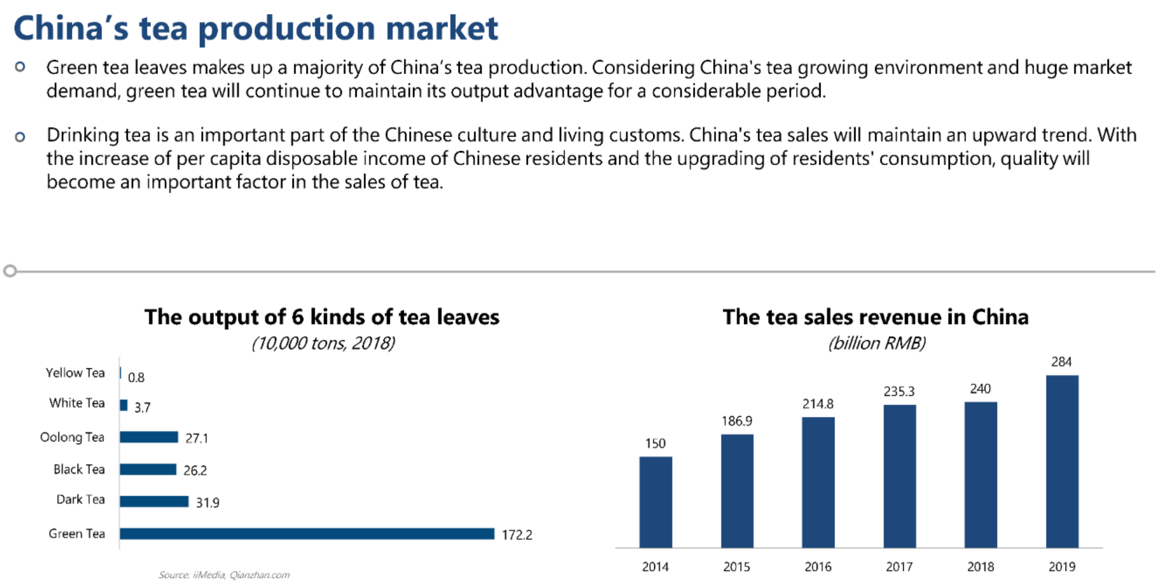

Figure 3 China's tea production market, tea sale revenues in China (Source: iiMedia, Qianzhn.com)

In recent years, the country's tea consumption has continued to grow, and will keep on growing. According to statistics from the China Tea Marketing Association (see Figure 4) the Chinese annual tea consumption in 2019 reached 2.025 million tons, an increase of 115 million tons which was an increase of 6.02% from 2018; the market sales were up to 273.950 billion yuan, and the average sales price was 135.25 yuan/kg

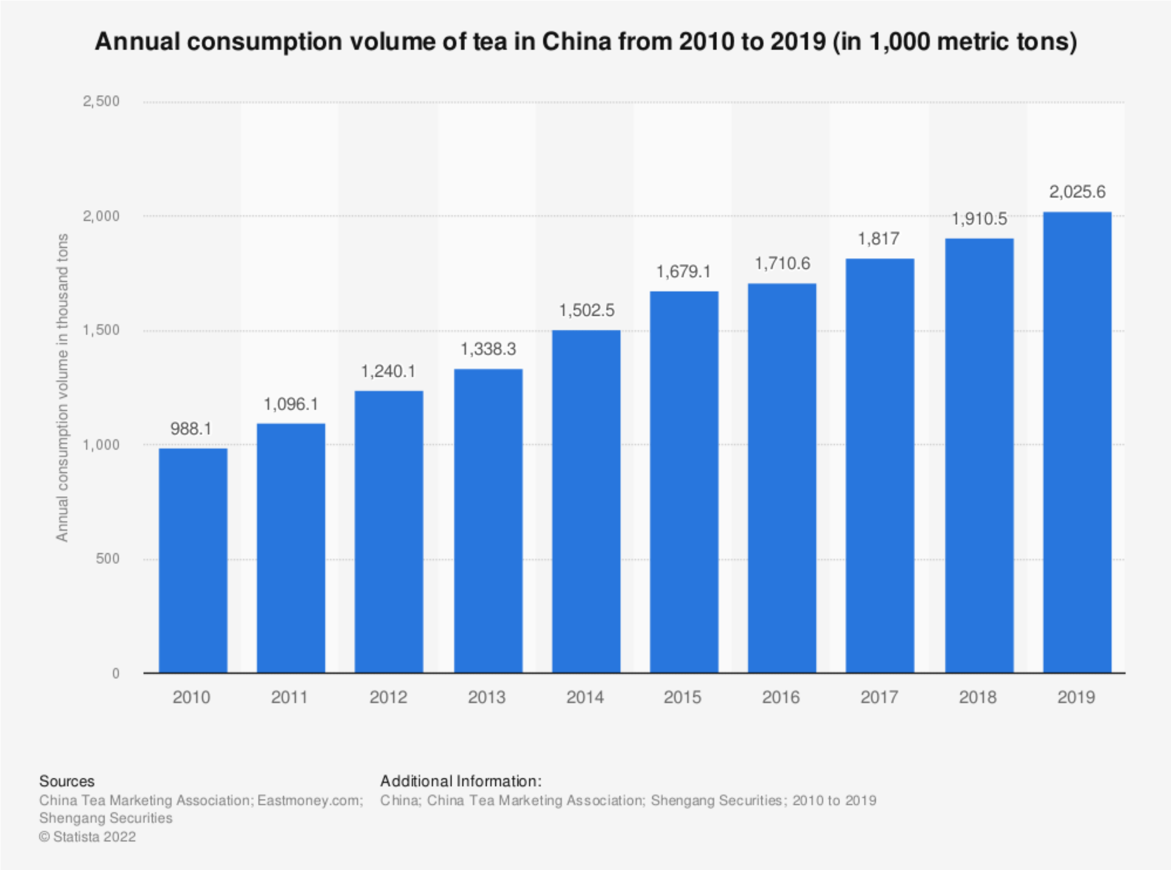

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Figure 4 Annual consumption volume of tea in China is on the rise, 2010 – 2019
(Source: China Tea Marketing Association)

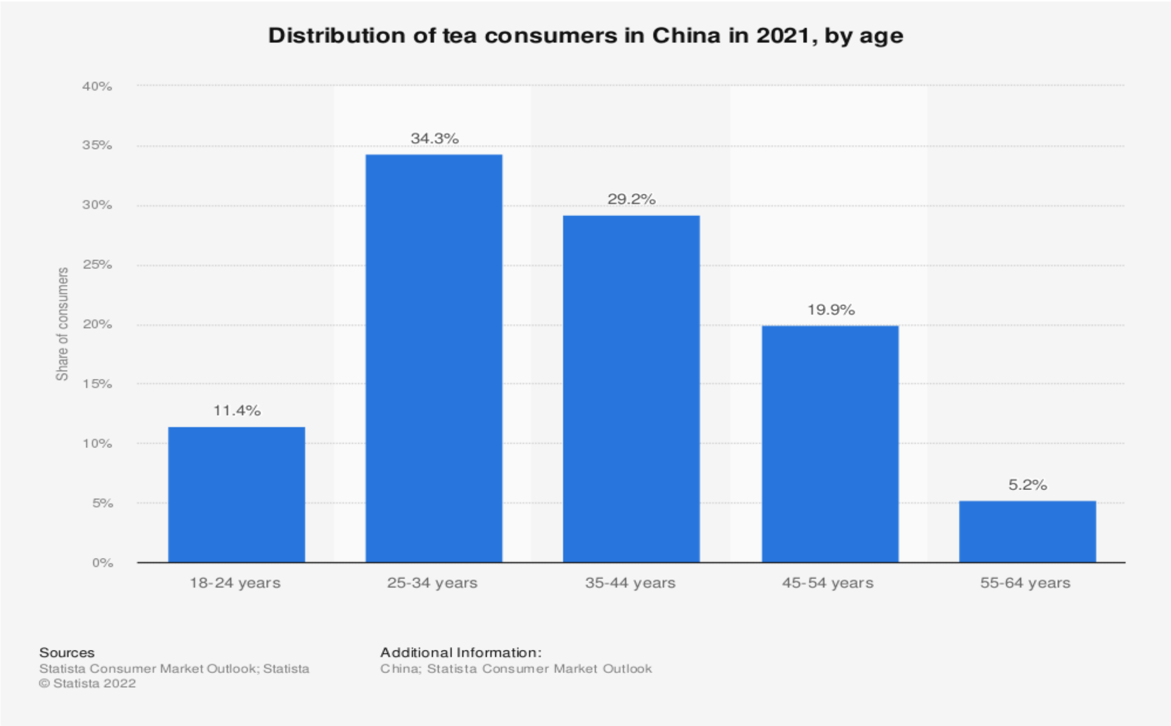

Figure 5 Distribution of tea consumers in China in 2021, by age
(Source: Statista: China Consumer Market)

Figure 5 indicates that 11.4% of consumers are between 18 and 24 years old; 34.3% are ‘millennials’ between 25 and 34 years old; 29.2% are between 35 and 44 years old; 19.9% fall in the 45-54-year-old category; while 5.2% are between 55 and 64 years old. Knowing their consumers by age (see Figure 5) and by income (see Figure 6), marketers are thus able to segment by the audience and assist their companies develop new products according to people’s demands and buying ability. High-priced and lavish products are aimed at people with higher incomes. At the same time, lower-price products are for people with lower incomes. So, an efficient segmentation of the audience can help better tackle their demands and serve them better. Hence, increasing the company’s profits, image, and offerings.

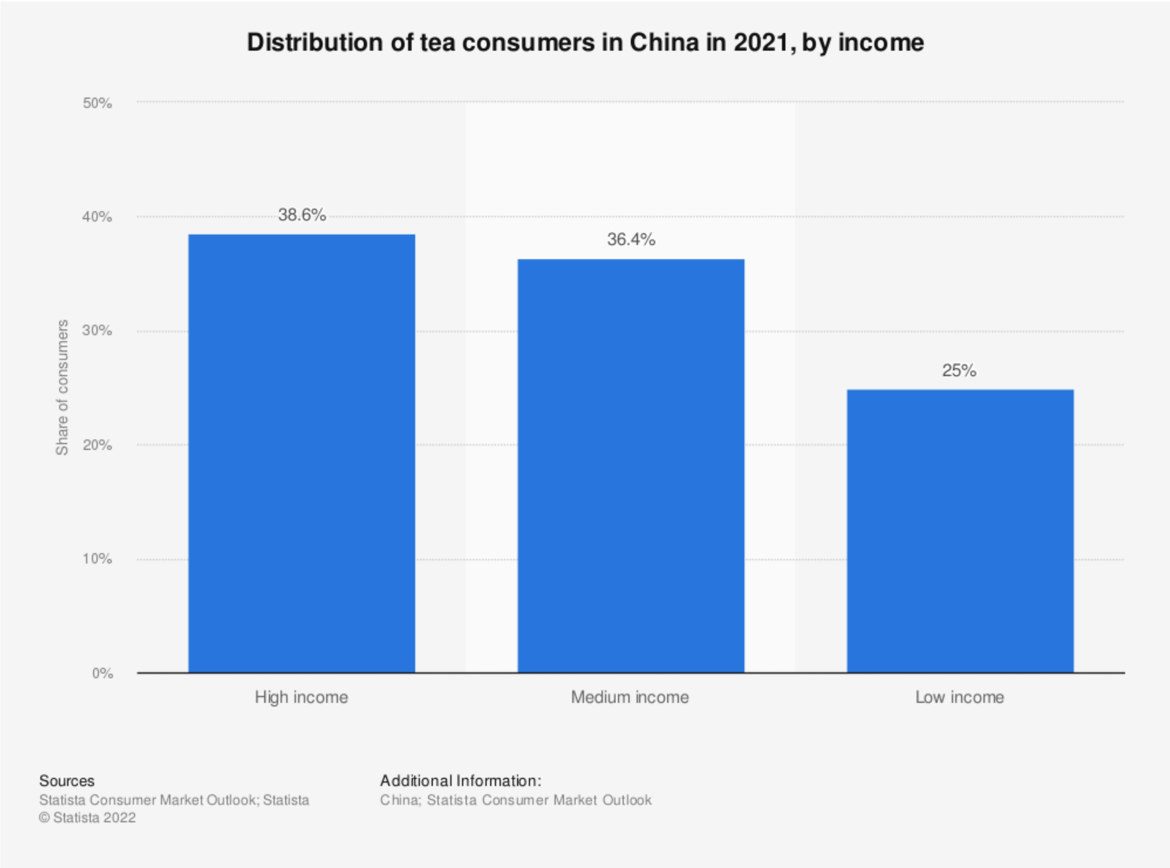

Figure 6 Distribution of tea consumers in China in 2021, by income (Source: Statista China Consumer Market)

Additionally, one of the metrics used by tea marketers is to categorize tea consumers into three income segments – high (38.6%), medium (36.4%) and low (25%) (see Figure 6).

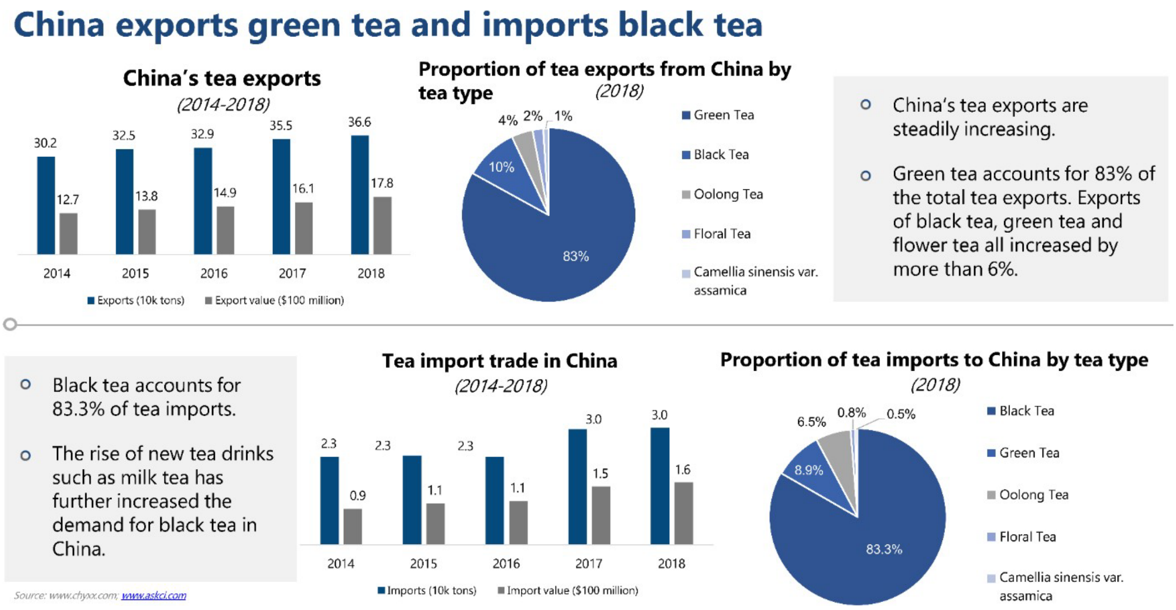

Figure 7 China exports green tea and imports black tea (Source: www.chyxx.com, www.aski.com)

China is not only a producer and exporter of tea; the country also imports tea, of which 83% is black tea (see Figure 7). Green tea exports share a similar quantity at 83%. The country exported 312.3 thousand metric tons of green tea; 29.6 thousand metric tons of black tea; 19.1 thousand metric tons of oolong tea; 5.8 thousand metric tons of flower tea, and 2.2 thousand metric tons of Pu'er tea, all increased by 6%, from 2014 - 2018 (Source, Statista, China Market Survey).

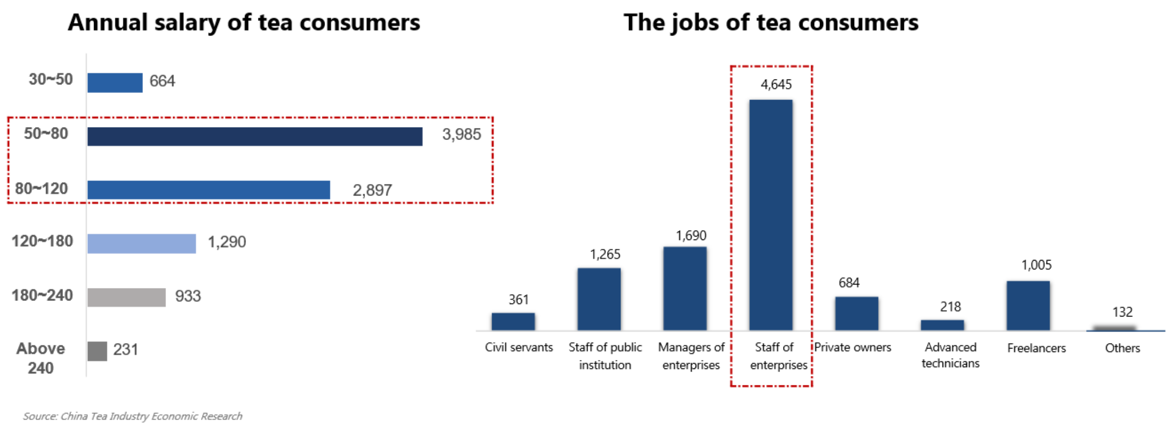

Figure 8 Income and occupation of tea drinkers (Source: China Tea Industry Economic Research)

According to the survey of China Tea Industry Research (10,000 respondents), tea consumers are mainly employees with an annual salary of 50,000-120,000 RMB (US$ 7,000 – 47,000), and they usually have decent spending power and pursue a high-quality life (see

Figure 8. Seventy-nine percent of the spending on luxury goods and services in China is done by people under 40. Not only that, according to both McKinsey and Bain, China will account for roughly half of all *global* luxury spending by 2025. Pre-Covid, China was the largest outbound travel spender in the world — and the 40-and-under population hold two-thirds of the country's passports. One-third of all study abroad students in the United States hail from China (HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW 2021).

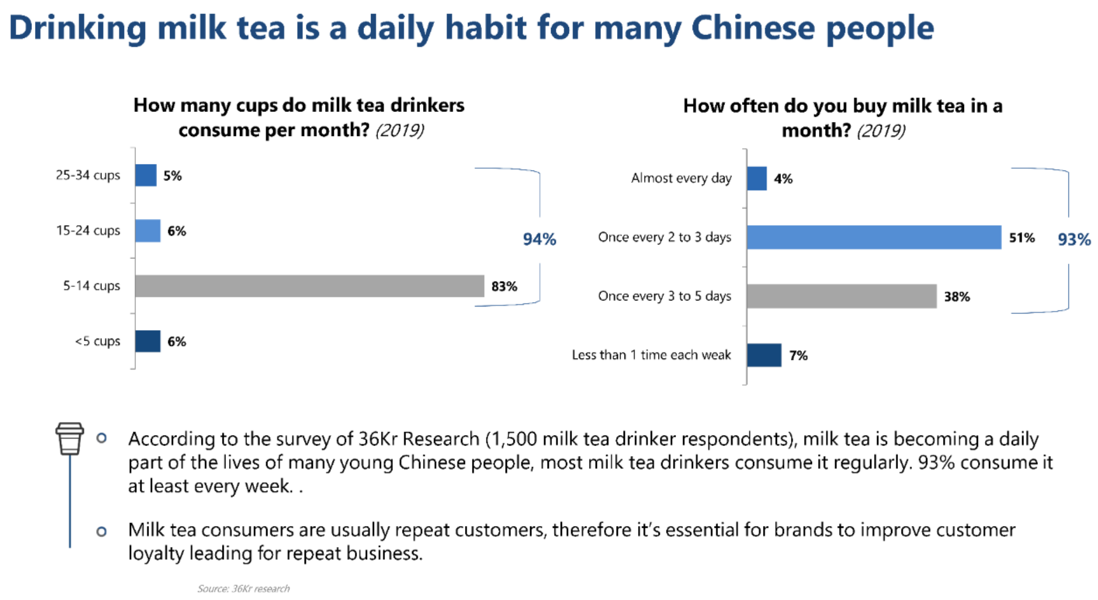

Figure 9 Drinking Milk tea is a daily habit (Source: 36kr research)

Figure 9 reveals that from a survey of 1,500 young milk tea drinkers, 93% drink milk tea at least once a week. Brand loyalty in this segment is not the same as coffee, where consumers would buy their coffee from the same shop or café. Most coffee shops in China have loyalty programs with smartphone push campaigns targeting their users, who receive benefits such as free coffee, cakes, free delivery and even reminders to order their coffee.

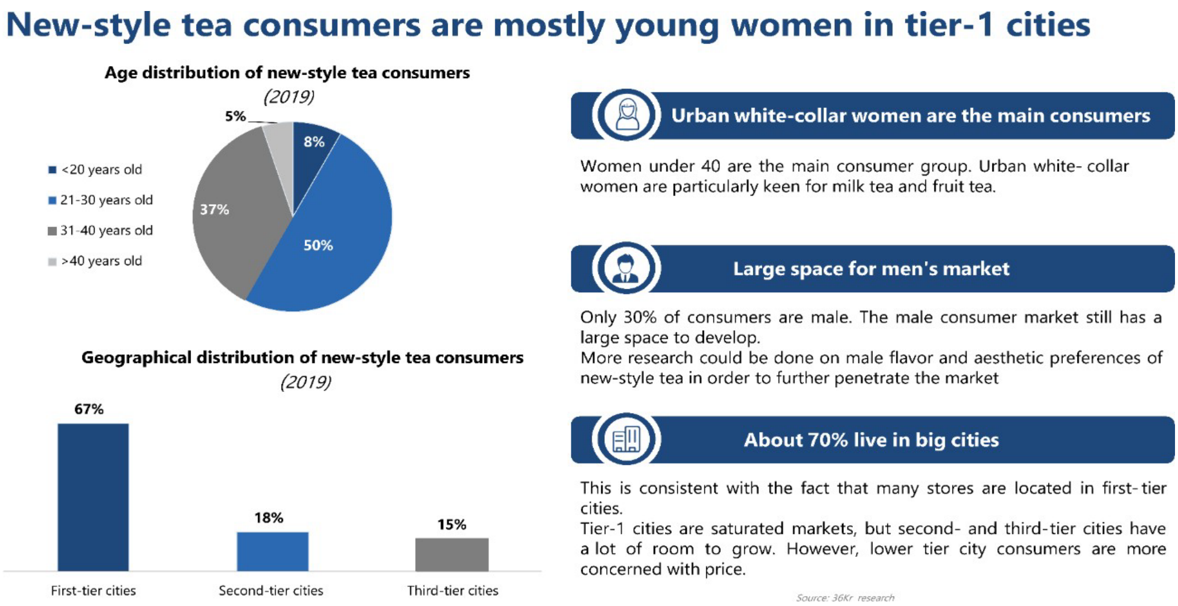

Figure 10 New-style tea consumers are mostly young urban, white-collar women under the age of forty (Source: 36kr Research)

Figure 10 illustrates that 67% of the new tea consumers are found in first-tier cities, 18% in second-tier cities, with 15% in third-tier cities. This is consistent with the fact that most high-end retail outlets are located in first-tier cities, although many are now opening in the lower tiers.

Men are not prominent in the market for new-style tea. Only 30% of them consume the teas, since they believe these teas are too feminine and are suitable only for their girlfriends or wives. Men find the combination of cheese, fruits (bubble tea, cheese-foam tea, lemon scented, and coffee-chai) and other teas with toppings like jellies and tapioca pearls to not be ‘real’ tea and not manly.

The new-style direct-sales tea shops, such as Hey Tea, Nayuki, and Modern China Tea are concentrated in first-tier cities in high-end shopping areas where the prices for the cheese tea, milk tea and fruit tea range from 19 to 28 yuan, depending upon the ingredients. Franchised new-style tea shops, such as Mi Xue Bing Yu, Coco, and Yidiandian can be found in first, second- and third-tier cities but they don't compare with, nor carry the image of, the high-end brands. Their prices range from 5 yuan to 16 yuan (Source: 36kr research).

3. IMPORTANCE OF BRANDING

Human civilization is addicted to signs, and the human mind cannot work without them. People make their own decisions when asking who to be, how to live and what to buy, but in all of it, in conditions created by marketing and brand publicity (HEALEY 2008). The word “brand” comes from an ancient Norwegian or Teutonic expression which stands for “to burn” (HEALEY 2008).

3.1. Brand

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as "*a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition*." (American Marketing Association website).

Following this definition, distinguishing between a brand (Lipton) and a product (Chinese tea) is key. And to the mind of Stephen King, "*A product is something made in a factory; a brand is something that the customer buys. A competitor can copy a product; a brand is unique. A product can be quickly outdated; a successful brand endures*." (KING quotes, 2017). But how can a brand distinguish itself from regular, everyday commodities?

“A business that is not branded or doesn’t have a brand presence is just a commodity. A brand evokes emotion. It allows connotations to be attached, it is personable. This is powerful because it is emotive, for emotion is key in driving considerable actions.” (MCGETRICK 2012).

As answers to the questionnaire will show, not only does the consumer benefit from branding, the benefits accrue to the company. As FILL (2002) says, a brand builds consumers’ confident beliefs to rely on the brand to deliver promised services or products and the willingness to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated functions. Once customer loyalty has been established, companies can expect the brand to generate profit from premium prices and higher margins. The increased profits can then be invested and reinvested in new opportunities (KAPFERER 2008, FILL 2013). In addition, branding affects several aspects helping to ensure the success of goods and/or services. It can strengthen the organizations’ and brands’ good reputation, creating loyalty while underscoring the concept of a greater value. (HEALEY 2008). Branding creates positive experiences in the minds of consumers; it represents big ideas and a system of beliefs that the customers consider unique and useful (KAPUTA 2010). It also affects customer satisfaction and is a never-ending process (SOVIAR 2011).

3.2. Brand Equity and Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)

Brand equity, an innovative marketing concept, became a hot component in the marketing mix in the 1980s. And with this newly found importance of brands in marketing strategies, the brand became of substantial value. Aaker proposed that brand loyalty, perceived quality/leadership, associations/differentiation, awareness, and market behavior are the various dimensions acting as sources of brand equity. Brand equity loyalty was captured in two elements: the price premium and satisfaction/loyalty. (AAKER 2010). Not only is brand equity an asset to the company’s financial health, but it also guides marketers to analyze previous marketing accomplishments, then redesign and implement new programs (KELLER 2009). Indeed, as FILL (2013) has advised, a product with strong brand equity renders greater opportunities to preserve its enduring preference to ensure the consumer purchases the product again and again, and ‘the point of determined defense’ means that the person defends himself from the proliferation of aggressive competitors.

Brand equity can be identified from twin points of view: financial and consumer brand equity. This thesis will centre on the consumer perspective, which stresses the customer and marketing-related elements, for example, the beliefs, images, and core consumers associate with a brand (PELSMACKER et al. 2013, GEUENS and BERGH 2013, 52, FILL 2013). Consumer value is regarded as being of high importance since the consumer behavior associated with the brand generates cash flow premium enjoyed by a successful brand. (AAKER and BIEL 1993). In assessing consumer response to the Lipton brand, this study considers ‘customer-based brand equity’ (CBBE) from the consumer perspective, as introduced by KELLER (2009). The theory of the CBBE model relates to how your customers' attitudes toward your brand influence the success of your business overall. If customers recognize, understand, and connect with your brand, performance goes up (provided experiences are positive).

3.3. Brand Equity -- Source

Built on the concept of the CBBE model, as shown in Figure 11, brand knowledge comprises brand awareness and brand image (KELLER 2009).

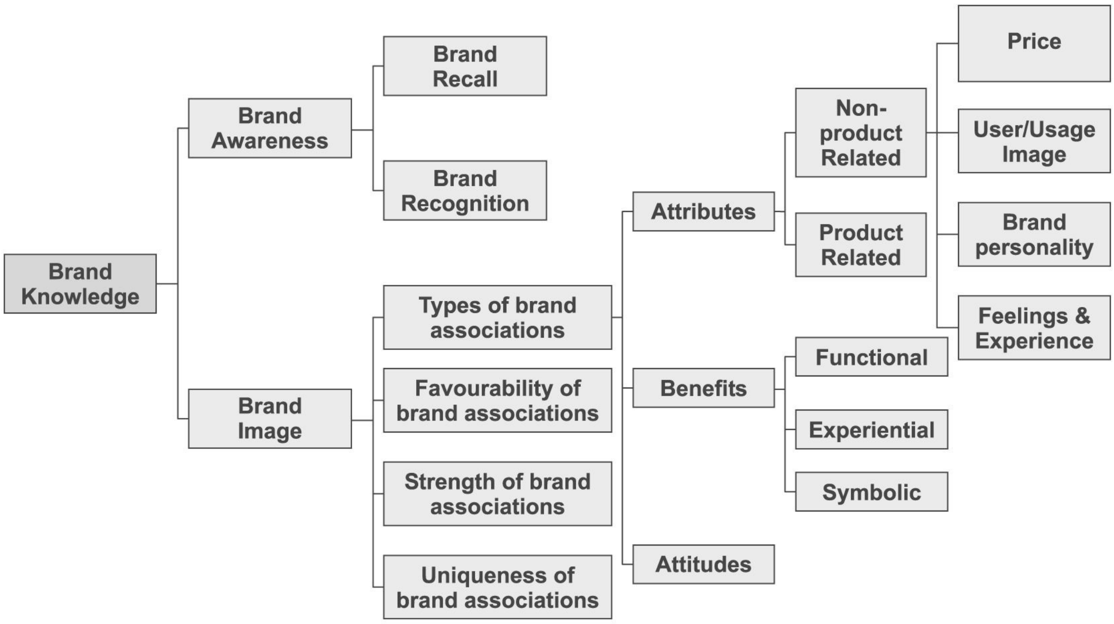

Figure 11. Brand Knowledge (Keller 1998)

Considering the ‘brand knowledge’ component of the model, the questionnaire in this study will help to develop an understanding how Chinese tea consumers perceive the Lipton brand.

3.4. Brand Awareness

AAKER (1991) companies with brand awareness can use their visibility in a community to attract more customers, which can increase their revenue. It is usually measured by the methods customers remember a brand, ranging through recognition, recall, and ‘top of mind’ (AAKER 2010). (See Figure 12.)

Figure 12 The awareness pyramid (Aaker 1991).

Figure 13 illustrates the manner AAKER (1991) assesses the value of brand awareness. An elevated awareness of the brand is the most primary and essntial steps in creating brand equity. Branding has become a top management priority which has necessitated that all members of an organization have an understanding and appreciation of some branding basics. Towards that goal, this paper outlines some important principles of brands, branding, and brand equity. The paper also highlights some key concepts in building, measuring, and managing brand equity (KELLER 2003).

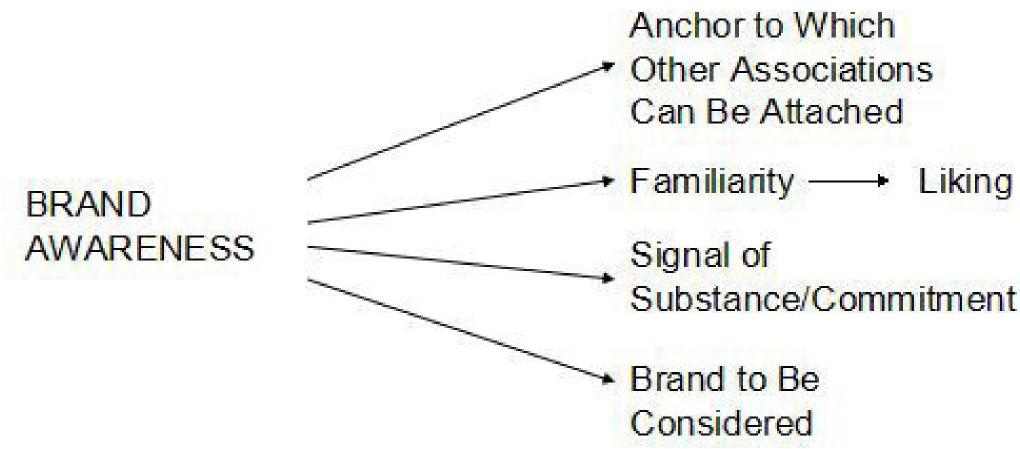

Figure 13 The value of brand awareness (Aaker 1991).

This model interprets brand equity as a combination of a brand's awareness, loyalty and perceived quality. These assets can help a company increase the value of its products or services, which can have several benefits for the customer. According to the model, brand equity can:

- Help retrieve information: the model suggests that brand equity can help customers learn, understand and retrieve more information about a brand.
- Influence purchasing decisions: the Aaker model suggests brand equity can increase customers' confidence in their purchasing decisions because of their familiarity with the brand.
- Increase customer satisfaction: according to the model, brand equity helps customers feel confident in the quality of a brand, which can increase their satisfaction with the company.

The survey results in this thesis will reveal how consumers reacted to the Lipton brand and various aspects of the brand.

3.5. Branding - Four Steps to Success

The four-step CBBE model shown earlier, describes the building a strong brand one as one layer atop the other. All layers are built to achieve certain objectives with current and future customers. The four steps:

- Who are you? First, your goal is to create "brand salience," or awareness – in other words, you need to make sure that your brand stands out, and that customers recognize it and are aware of it.
- What are you? Identify and communicate what your brand means to your customers, and what it stands for. Do this by considering your brand in terms of "performance" and "imagery":
- What Do I Think, or Feel, About You? Your customers' responses to your brand will typically fall into two categories: "judgments" and "feelings."
- How Much of a Connection Would I Like to Have With You? Brand "resonance" sits at the top of the brand equity pyramid because it's the most difficult – and the most desirable – level to reach. You have achieved brand resonance when your customers feel a deep, psychological bond with your brand (KELLER 2003).

To achieve what we have just described, we must consider a more structured approach and adopt Kotler's four-level, six-segment building blocks comprising salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance. If they are designed, built, and implemented successfully, they will resemble a well-constructed strategy to create brand equity. To engineer the first-in-consumers'-minds for the brand, the structure must be constructed to reflect and enhance your customers' feelings, as illustrated below in Figure 14. The pyramid is the focus.

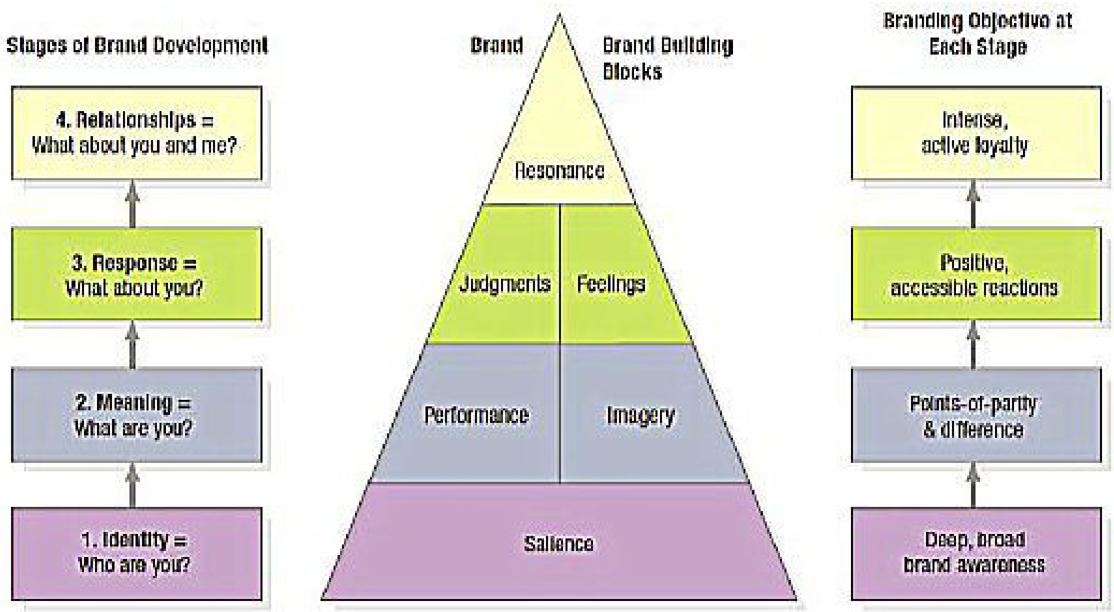

Figure 14 Brand Resonance Pyramid (KOTLER et al. 2012, 271)

As KOTLER mentioned, the model also shows its dual functionality. The rational side, and the emotional side (KOTLER et al. 2012).

3.6. What is the Trust Advantage in Brand Equity for Your Product?

AAKER and BIEL (1993) define brand equity as a set of five categories of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm or to that firm's customers, or both. These categories of brand assets are (a) brand loyalty, (b) brand awareness, (c) perceived quality, (d) brand associations, and (e) other proprietary assets (e.g., patents, trademarks, and channel relationships).

These assets, in turn, provide various benefits and value to the firm. KELLER (2003) defined CBBE as the impact that customer knowledge about a brand has on their response to marketing activities and programs for that brand. According to this view, brand knowledge is not the facts about the brand—it is all the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. All of these types of information can be thought of in terms of associations to the brand in customer memory. Two particularly important components of brand knowledge are brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node or traces in memory, as reflected by customers' ability to recall or recognize the brand under different conditions.

Brand image is defined as customer perceptions of and preferences for a brand, as reflected by the various brand associations held in customers' memory. Moreover, as strong brands reduce risk, their long-term cash flows can be discounted at lower rates, resulting in higher valuations (SRIVASTAVA and REIBSTEIN 2005). There are two basic, complementary approaches to measuring CBBE. An "indirect" approach would assess potential sources of CBBE by identifying and tracking customers' brand knowledge structures. A 'direct' approach, on the other hand, would measure customer-based brand equity by assessing the actual impact of brand knowledge on customer response to different marketing program elements. Illustrations of the direct approach include the financial or market outcome-based measures of brand equity such as revenue premium (AILAWADI et al. 2003), brand equity as a price premium measure (HOLBROOK 1991; RANDALL et al. 1998), and brand equity as a measure of brand extendibility (RANDALL et al. 1998).

3.7. Customer Equity

Customer equity is about the customer's subjective and intangible assessment of the brand, above and beyond its objectively perceived value. RUST et al. (2000, 2004) defined customer equity as the discounted lifetime values of a firm's customer base. In their view, customer equity is made up of three components and key drivers:

- Value equity: Customers' objective assessment of the utility of a brand based on perceptions of what is given up for what is received. Three drivers of value equity are quality, price, and convenience.
- Brand equity: Customers' subjective and intangible assessment of the brand, above and beyond its objectively perceived value. Three key drivers of brand equity are customer brand awareness, customer brand attitudes, and customer perception of brand ethics.
- Relationship equity: Customers' tendency to stick with the brand, above and beyond objective and subjective assessments of the brand. The four key drivers of relationship equity are loyalty, special recognition and treatment, community, and knowledge- building programs.

Note that this definition of brand equity is inconsistent with current branding theory and practice. It differs from the CBBE definition reviewed above that focuses on the beneficial differential response to all marketing activity that strong brands produce. Some marketing observers have perhaps minimized the challenge and value of strong brands to overly emphasize the customer equity perspective, maintaining that "our attitude should be that brands come and go—but customers must remain" (RUST et al. 2004).

3.8. Power Your Brand for Customer Acquisition

An important aspect of customer satisfaction is how the brand influences the consumer to continue to use the brand and spread their confidence and satisfaction through to other people. A fundamental research interest in understanding customer acquisition is in identifying the probability of a customer being acquired. Several studies have explored this question and have uncovered valuable insights (LIX and BERGER 1995, REINARTZ et al. 2005). For instance, VON WANGENHEIM and BAY (2007) find that customer satisfaction influenced the number of word of mouth (WOM) referrals, which impacted customer acquisition, and that the reception of a WOM referral had an increased marginal effect on the likelihood of a prospect to purchase. This is achieved by studying (1) whether prospects' purchase likelihood is a function of WOM referrals and (2) whether the characteristics of the WOM referral source influence the probability that received WOM induces a purchase behavior. In a business to business (B2B) setting, studies have investigated the role of referrals in customer acquisition. For instance, HADA et al. (2010) recognize the types of referrals (customer–to–potential customer referrals, horizontal referrals, and supplier-initiated referrals) and have developed the concept of referral equity to capture the net effect of all referrals for a supplier firm in the market.

In addition, KUMAR et al. (2013) have developed and tested an approach to compute business reference value (BRV), identify the behavioral drivers of BRV, and offer strategies to target and manage the most promising customers based on their customer lifetime value (CLV) and BRV scores. In addition to customer acquisition, the number of newly acquired customers and their initial order quantity is also important. At the same time, LEWIS and SINGH (2006) identify that shipping fees influence the customer acquisition process and the initial order size. VILLANUEVA et al. (2008) show that market channels also influence the customer acquisition process and the value that newly acquired customers will bring to the company.

3.9. How to Fascinate Your Customer With Your Brand

An intricate relationship exists between a firm's customer equity and the brand equity of the products it sells. It is relatively straightforward for a single-product firm to see customer equity. They can pay attention to the way the brand gains awareness. Brand awareness directly influences brand knowledge because the brand will capture customers' attention due to a good brand image (HOGSHEAD 2016). Once a customer's fascination is captured, a curiosity develops in their minds and they seek more information about it.

Furthermore, brand knowledge generates psychological and behavioral distinctions in the customers' associations to ensure that sellers have affirmative brand knowledge and that customers do not hesitate to purchase a branded product. Experimental reactions of the consumers hit the brand knowledge (WATKINS et al. 2016). At the same time, the advertiser enhances promotional efficiency. The main rationale is to increase brand knowledge, which leads to customer-based brand equity. The users' memory of the brand knowledge is important because when they think about a specific brand, what comes to mind first strongly affects their perceptions. Brand knowledge is a wide term which covers brand awareness and brand image (TUFEKCI 2012). Due to the increment in the brand's image, customer loyalty may be improved. This determines the affection for a brand. Lastly, creating a powerful and fascinating brand is the first and foremost goal because success depends upon it.

3.10. How Emotion Affects a Buying Decision and How to Make it Work for You

Buying decisions are influenced by selling an emotion (ZIGLAR 2014). According to ZIGLAR, logic makes people think, and emotion makes people act. The logic bridge between buyer and seller represents only 20% of a buying decision in a B2B (business to business) setting (GSCHWANDTNER 2012). Doctor Albert Mehrabian at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles) found in his research that feelings and attitudes are communicated 7% by words, 38% by tone of voice, and 55% nonverbally (GSCHWANDTNER 2012). People don't buy for logical reasons. They buy for emotional reasons (ZIGLAR 2014).

Buying decisions are always the result of a change in the customer's emotional state. While information is helpful when changing emotional state, it is the emotion that is important, not the information (JAMES 2012). All decisions stem from greed, fear, altruism, envy, pride, or shame. When enough emotions are present, a buying decision becomes inevitable (JAMES 2012). Emotion is the adhesive that, when mixed with trust, equals loyalty. Trust means that unequal exchange can be accepted occasionally because things will even out over the long term (JAMES 2012). When consumer trust in a brand is undermined, there is a corresponding loss in market power, as customers have less faith that the company will live up to expectations (O'SHAUGHNESSY 2003).

3.11. Brand Emotional Attachment

Individuals who are strongly attached to others tend to create loyal behaviors with their partners (MENDE et al. 2013). In a sense, Brand Emotional Attachment (BEA) is a required condition to develop e-loyalty. In marketing, strong emotional attachment is illustrated by resistance to the temptation of considering new products and their significant superiority. Also, emotionally attached consumers tend to show loyalty behaviors towards a brand, even during severe market conditions (KALAKUMARI and SEKAR 2013). When individuals value the influential role of brands in accomplishing their objectives, they consider the brands as directly significant. They become emotionally attached to their preferred brands (PARK et al. 2010).

Individuals at this reasonable level of emotional connection uncover loyal behaviors due to their inspiration to preserve the relationship with the brand (PARK et al. 2010). Loyal consumers are less likely to switch to a brand because of price and attached consumers tend to make more regular purchases than equivalent non-attached consumers (ALLENDER and RICHARDS 2012). This emotional attachment can result in loyal behavior and a desire to stay in a long-term relationship with the product. Particularly, BEA increases the likelihood of strongly predicting how often the brand has been used and the likelihood of it being used again in the future (MCALEXANDER et al. 2003).

Brand attitudes. Consumers that are emotionally attached to a brand are also likely to have a favorable attitude toward it. However, the emotional attachment should be distinguished from other constructs with which it might be correlated, such as brand attitude favorability, satisfaction, and involvement. However, although favorable brand attitudes are often reflected in strong attachments, the constructs differ in several critical ways. Attitudes reflect one's evaluative reactions to an object, and these reactions can develop without any direct contact with it.

First, strong attachments develop over time and are often based on interactions between an individual and an attachment object (BALDWIN et al. 1996). These interactions encourage the development of meaning and invoke strong emotions about the attachment object. Thus, a consumer might have a positive attitude toward an object without ever having any experience with it.

Second, consumers can have favorable attitudes toward any number of consumption objects and objects with little centrality or importance to their lives. However, the objects to which consumers emotionally attach are few and generally regarded as profound and significant (cf. BALL and TASAKI 1992).

Third, strong attachments are attended by a rich set of schemas and affectively laden memories that link the object to the self (HOLMES 2000). In contrast, favorable attitudes do not necessarily link the object to the self and the self- concept.

3.12. How Reference Buying Can Increase Product Recognition and Customer Acquisition

UNIVERSUM (2013) brings the theory of five factors necessary for a successful brand. It has to be cool, real, and unique. The customer also has to find self- identification in it, and it has to bring happiness (VAN DEN BERGH and BEHRER 2011). Former President and CEO of Hewlett-Packard Meg Whitman once said: “When people use your brand as a verb, that is remarkable” (MSC Brand leadership 2013). Since the time that the Google Company was founded in September 1998, it took eight years for the word ‘Google’ to be registered as a verb in the Oxford English dictionary, even though in terms of behavior it had already been the world's largest internet search provider for the last six years (MATIJEK 2013). Since it became a global brand, Lipton, although faced with unprecedented competition, is synonymous with tea by fulfilling the five factors mentioned above.

3.13. Controversy Surrounds Brand Evaluation

John Stuart, a former CEO of Quaker Oats, said: “If this business were split up, I would give you the land and bricks and mortar, and I would keep the brands and trademarks, and I would fare better than you” (HEALEY 2008). Brand evaluation is a controversial discipline. It is difficult to attribute exact financial value to intangible assets (HEALEY 2008). Official methods try to isolate abstract matter, in this case, a brand, from more concrete assets whose value in the company is easy to measure, including factories, know-how, patents etc. (HEALEY 2008).

There exist more theories which offer a different way of measuring value. But the fundamental principle is similar for the majority of them. One of the most famous ways of measuring is performed by the consulting company “Interbrand.” Strong brands enhance business performance primarily through their influence on three key stakeholder groups: customers (current and prospective), employees and investors. The methodology considers all of these stakeholders and value-creation levers (INTERBRAND 2012). Brand strength measures the ability to create future demand continuity through loyalty. In doing this, it considers internal (management and employers) and external (customer) factors. Inputs are combined with a business's financial model to measure the brand’s ability to create economic value (INTERBRAND 2012). The methodology seeks to determine, in customer and financial terms, the brand's contribution to business results (INTERBRAND 2012). The process consists of three main analyses: financial, demand and competitive. Via these, it is possible to express the brand's economic profit, the role of the brand index (RBI) and the brand strength score (BSS). The second level examines factors like clarity, commitment, protection, responsiveness, authenticity, relevance, differentiation, consistency, presence or understanding. Combing these analyses and factors creates brand value (INTERBRAND 2012).

The brand phenomenon is supported and verified by many resources from all over the world. It attracts consumers and creates connections to the brand through the emotions that accompany it. A powerful brand is a strong and effective tool for building a good reputation and consumer loyalty that brings greater sales. A strong and famous brand is also a key factor when finding top job applicants. Brand building has become extraordinarily important so the company can succeed in any field of work (eXclusive Journal, May 2015).

3.14. How to Sustain Keller's CBBE Model and Purely Interrelate it With This Theory

The brand image consists of an asset of ideas in the perception of the consumer regarding a certain brand. Moreover, brand image is the valuation of a product in the customer's memory because it has genuine and purely practical links with customers' psyche. Brand image is significant because it assists the end user in determining whether a specified brand is suitable for him/her. Furthermore, to remind particulars about a product, brand image can be used as an observant (CHEN et al. 2014). In the current era of the business brand, corporate image is considered an asset of the business because people mostly attract towards a well-known brand. The personality of the brand is generally revealed by its image, so it is extremely important for a business. Ultimately brand image represents the basic standards and the whole reflection of the organization.

The brand image also establishes the product's sales because an appealing brand image magnetizes the customers towards buying a product. After all, it makes the decision process easier, while generating brand awareness is generally the first and foremost step to develop a brand (FOROUDI et al. 2017). It does not involve know-how about the brand or having an observation about the brand; it involves the relationship with the brand name, logo, sign, and symbol, plus complete knowledge of the brand in the perceptions of the end users.

3.15. How Brand Strategies Influence the Users' Minds

In the current era, due to the extraordinary cost, greater rivalry, and minor demand in the countless marketplaces, organizations are concentrating on enhancing the effectiveness of their promotion expenditures. This means that it is necessary to properly understand the brand equity to increase market efficiency (BRENNAN et al. 2015). While the vendors develop the market knowledge concerning the brand in the perception of the consumers, then it generally directs towards the customer-based brand equity, which purely supports the theory of the Keller CBBE model. Brand knowledge is strongly influenced in the mind of the end users due to the temporary market strategies (GIRI and SHARMA 2014).

Brand knowledge is a sophisticated tool because users become competent to remember the brand efficiently and quickly after having knowledge about a particular brand. Brand knowledge effectively hits the customers' perceptions because it enforces the people to select a brand according to their knowledge (HEMSLEY-BROWN et al. 2016). Brand knowledge leads to responsiveness, elements, familiarity, feeling, reflection as well as reputation of the brand. These directions mentioned above involve developing connections with the consumers in the context of business-to-business marketing. The basic motive in the wake of such an application is to remind the end users about the dominating brands by using their brand knowledge and desires for the period of procuring (KANG et al. 2014).

Brand knowledge helps organizations to create an encouraging brand position in the minds of the purchaser. It is also judged as a competitive tool because when companies provide knowledge about their brand to distributors, then companies can be assured that sellers are well informed about the product and it becomes a competitive edge for the companies. Brand knowledge determines the relationship between the brand and the customer (KOLL and VON WALLACH 2014). The brand knowledge concept is purely relevant to the CBBE model of KELLER. He explained that brand knowledge is a success factor because the organization's strength largely depends upon what the consumers have experienced with the brand, as well as recalling the brand quickly (TATLOW-GOLDEN 2014).

3.16. Summary

The literature reviewed here, supported by commentary and theory by experts in the United States and Europe, provides insights into how brands succeed. The different models related to branding convey consistent messages despite their emanating from sources in diverse areas of the world in different decades. The literature review also helps to understand the way specific marketing communications tools can benefit Lipton, the case study brand for this thesis, by adopting the essence of many of the responses generated from the questionnaire and survey conducted among a number of Chinese respondents.

In addition, when we examine branding and look at Keller's CBBE model, it relates to many similar ideas and theories proposed by such experts as Van den Bergh, who cited five factors that contribute to a brand's success. Kotler's Brand Resonance Pyramid carries the same message, although structured differently than Rust, who claimed equity as the "discounted lifeline value of the firm's customer base." On the other hand, Von Wanenheim and Bayon indicated that customer satisfaction influences the number of word-of-mouth referrals.

Hogshead wrote, "once a customer's satisfaction is captured, a curiosity develops in their minds, and they seek more information about it."

In addition, since a great portion of the thesis revolves around tea in China, my literature research led me to books, papers, and journals from experts in organizations as diverse as the WTO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, to Chinese experts in tea cultivation, such as Guan Xi, Huang, and Wu who analyzed changes in tea production and economy, as well as reviewing presentations, graphs and commentary from consulting firms such as Daxue, Statista, and McKinsey.

4. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The objective of the research was to identify customer perceptions of the product range currently offered by Lipton, the case study in this thesis. Through interviews, the research also investigated perceptions of the various marketing communications tools used by Lipton.

The questionnaire, comprising four multiple-choice questions and 12 direct questions, and the semi-structured interview containing nine questions, were uploaded to SOJUMP, an online site in China that permits companies and individuals to launch interviews and questionnaires to tens of thousands of SOJUMP users. The results were calculated by SOJUMP using their in-house SPSS method.

Responses from the key target demographic whose ages ranged from under 16 to over 35, formed the basis of the results shown in Tables 1 through 12.

4.1. Background

Tea is one of the major beverages in the world. There are more than 60 tea-producing countries and regions worldwide, and the tea- drinking population exceeds 3 billion in 160 countries and regions (FARRERCOFFEE/UK). China is the biggest tea producer in the world, contributing 2.6 million tons, accounting for 44.7% of the total production (DAXUE: World Tea News, April 2019). Meanwhile, China is also the world's biggest tea consumer. According to statistics from the International Tea Council. In 2019, China's tea consumption reached 2.025 million tons (STATISTA 2022). China consumes 40% of the tea consumed daily worldwide. (chyxx.com, skci.com).

Even though history records that tea was invented by the Chinese, who introduced it to the world, the tea industry in China faces headwinds due to fierce competition and barriers brought by globalization. China's joining the WTO in 2001 changed the world order, and according to the Organization's 'national treatment' principle, the direction opened the way for international tea companies to enter the Chinese tea market. The domestic tea-producing and processing farms were therefore forced to go against deep-pocketed international MNCs with extensive and established market experiences and with renowned tea categories. (GU 2001). Sadly, the tea industry in China now lacks its earlier advantages. Moreover, their weaknesses are visible within the context of today's globalization. Chinese tea/farm enterprises must, therefore, develop new methods to surmount hurdles of fierce rivalry between themselves, the different tea varieties they produce, between tea and other beverages, and with foreign tea brands.

4.2. Problem Identified

Since tea has surpassed water as the most popular beverage in the world, the number of tea processing companies has increased, as has the trend of tea consumption in China. Tea is in high demand in China, and with such a diverse range of products available, consumers will not purchase a product unless they are confident in its positive attributes. The Chinese tea brand market is highly competitive. Among them are well-known tea brands from around the world or the region, such as Lipton. The company's success leads to increasing consumer awareness of its products (DOYLE and STERN 2007).

Along with other critical issues, Chinese tea manufacturers must study and practice marketing techniques. Aside from producing Chinese tea, it is vital to sell it successfully; this is a problematic issue in terms of competition. A successful brand has a broad and profound meaning. According to DOYLE and STERN (2007), a successful brand consists of three components: high-quality goods (P), differentiating characteristics (D), and additional values (AV). According to research, brand success requires more than just raising awareness. Branding encompasses more than just product specifications. Brand success is determined by the buyer's associations with it and relationships with the brand, and the foundation of these relationships must be the complete fulfilment of brand promises.

According to SETURI (2017), the effective use of branding will assist businesses in drawing consumers' attention to their products. The quality of customer satisfaction is determined by a person's dignity or dissatisfaction when comparing his initial expectations with the actual characteristics of the product he purchased. In other words, customer satisfaction is determined by comparing the customer's expectations with the product's actual performance. Further, SETURI (2009) notes that consumers are increasingly concerned about food safety issues, including tea production. Unfortunately, in China, local tea production does not meet even the needs of the local population. The requirements of the developed laws and normative acts must be strictly followed, and the state must be actively involved.

The primary goal of this research was to 1) identify Lipton's weaknesses as a leading Chinese tea brand and 2) identify the significant factors preventing Lipton from achieving market success, in consideration of factors like Chinese consumers' tastes, preferences, dislikes, and more. The work includes research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

4.3. Objectives

The way in which consumer attitudes successfully play a role in promoting Lipton's brand in the Chinese tea market is the focus of this thesis, and to achieve it, the study will examine the contemporary Chinese tea market, compare consumers' attitudes and understanding of Lipton as well as the vast quantity of locally produced tea brands, and discover from the respondents which marketing/media messaging tools they prefer, and ultimately offer them recommendations.

Therefore, the sub-objectives to achieve the thesis' larger objectives are:

- To describe the fundamental ingredients and process to create a successful brand in a theoretical way.
- To theoretically describe the vital necessity of branding.
- To empirically examine how Lipton built its brand.
- To bring empirical-based evidence to interpret which marketing tools are most welcomed by Chinese customers.

4.4. Method

To achieve its purpose, we develop a semi-structured online interview combined with a questionnaire uploaded to Chinese living in China via the Chinese online platform SOJUMP, a widely popular site allowing people in China to voluntarily participate to have their voices heard. JUMP is a nationally representative website for businesses and consumers that permits self-administered questionnaires and surveys to be designed by the interested parties, then distributed through the system, with the results then collected and analyzed utilizing the site's internal online survey tool, if requested.

A two-part document was created for the electronic survey. An e-mail invitation (containing an embedded URL link to the website SOJUMP hosting the questionnaire) was e-mailed to 10,000 randomly selected website users from a pool of millions who login voluntarily. The first part of the questionnaire was to gather information on Lipton and its marketing communications channels; the second contained an introductory paragraph on the interview questionnaire describing the reason for my sending the interview questionnaire, reminding the respondents their personal information would be retained in confidence. Respondents were urged to read every item of the questionnaire in detail and to complete all the questions with their suitable and honest responses to each statement with their attitudes, feelings, in all aspects of Lipton and its brand.

The online questionnaire contained a screening question that required respondents to indicate in Question 6 whether they had heard of Lipton. Those who did not qualify for the screening question were informed that the survey would end at that point; otherwise, respondents were directed to continue the survey.

4.5. Limitations of the Research

The thesis has two constraints. First, it would have been more beneficial had the target population been more inclusive since the research was to be based on the entire Chinese consumer market. However, was on the Chinese consumer since I am in Hungary and the research was conducted in my home country, I could only create a small-scale empirical survey. Since only a small number of interviews were conducted online, I agree that variances certainly exist, meaning the survey is but a snapshot of overfall view held by Chinese consumers. Second, although the thesis aims to highlight the consumers' feelings, and viewpoints by collecting their evaluations of the brand, it would have been better to have had the Lipton company's voice involved, which is unfortunately absent. Their PR and IR staff declined to be interviewed, stating that their firm does not offer comments to be included in non-media publications, nor did they think their voice would add anything.

4.6. Data Collection

Primary and secondary data will be analyzed. To satisfy the empirical study, data from the semi-structured interview and online questionnaire will be used to address the research objectives.

4.7. The Semi-Structured Interview Method

The semi-structured interview was identified as the optimum method to interact with the target group to gain insights into their lives and experiences to glean the more salient meanings from their explanations to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak. A structured-direct survey involves administering a questionnaire. In a typical questionnaire, most questions are fixed-alternative questions that require the respondent to select from a predetermined set of responses (MALHOTRA et al. 2012).

To fulfill the thesis objectives, the brand performance, image, and marketing communication activities of Lipton and Chinese tea companies were examined to determine their efficacy. In addition, responses gathered from interviewees' opinions will assist in understanding the most efficient marcom tools for the current Chinese tea market and illustrate how Chinese tea brands need improvement.

4.8. Questionnaire Design and Analysis

A structured questionnaire is a document used to collect data from respondents and consists of a set of standardized questions with a predetermined framework that sets the precise language and sequence of the questions. The questionnaire was designed to permit the respondents to offer an oral or a written reply to the questions or even via a computer (SAUNDERS et al. 2009). In fact, the management and acquisition of more consistent and reliable data emanate from the use of questionnaires and are common in marketing research. Moreover, it simplifies the analysis and interpretation process of the data (MALHOTRA et al. 2012). The structured survey method has several advantages. First, the questionnaire is simple to administer. Second, the data obtained are reliable because the responses are limited. Using fixed-response questions reduces the variability in the results that differences in interviewers may cause. Finally, coding, analysis, and interpretation of data are relatively simple.

To attain the objectives of the thesis, a questionnaire was needed to capture Chinese consumers' overall evaluation of Lipton, delving into the outcomes of the brand's marketing communications and its brand resonance across contemporary China and discovering the marketing communication tools preferred by Chinese consumers. Therefore, I created a simple questionnaire so the participants could easily understand the problem researched aimed to increase the respondent rates. I selected SOJUMP, an online Chinese survey website and uploaded the questionnaire, randomly targeting vast numbers of Chinese of different gender, ages, income, and occupations who are willing to respond to online surveys. However, only the English version has been attached in the appendices.

But first, to verify the quality and clarity of the interview and questionnaire documents, I contacted a tea-drinking friend in China online in writing, explaining my thesis requirements and asked if she would review the documents to ensure all the questions were easily understood. When she confirmed they were, and to further qualify the contents, asked if she would pass along the questionnaire to some of her tea-drinking friends, none of whom are known to me. Nine agreed. She then sent the questionnaire to them, after which I received ten replies confirming the questionnaire was easy to understand. (Their responses do not form part of the results since they were just used to qualify the clarity of the interview questions and survey).

Accessing the questionnaire on SOJUMP is voluntary, and despite the questionnaire being available to thousands of people, only a small group chose to respond. From the vast numbers sent out (10,000), a total of 868 responses were gathered. The reason for the small number of respondents was that the questionnaire and survey were uploaded without specifically targeting any group, and no incentives were offered for participating (the Chinese love to receive rewards for participating in surveys). The data was then analyzed in terms of the completeness of each questionnaire; incomplete questionnaires with more than 10% missing cases were ignored for the analysis. Some users who participated in the study submitted incomplete questionnaires. These questionnaires were not included in the data analysis process. Therefore, a total of 308 usable responses were collected. The host site performed the data analysis using their internal SPSS. The various results are reflected in the Tables, numbered 1-12.

4.9. Case Study of the Most Successful Tea Brand in China: Path to Success

Lipton is a tea brand from England, focusing mainly on black tea, green tea, jasmine tea, and oolong tea. Its advertising slogan is: "Direct from tea garden to the teapot." In 1992, Lipton officially entered China and started selling black and green tea.

Figure 15 Lipton, the most successful tea-bag brand (Daxue Consulting, Beijing. 2019)

In Figure 15, we can see that due to the high quality and clear target market, Lipton in China has achieved very large sales and market share. In 2005, Lipton's owner Unilever invested 50 million USD in Anhui (安徽) province to build one of the biggest tea factories in the world at that time. In 2008, Lipton's total annual output value was about 23 billion RMB, which was almost two-thirds of the output value of China's tea bag industry (Daxue Consulting).

4.10. How Lipton Built Itself as a Mainstream Tea Brand

Lipton brought its standardized design and production of tea products when the brand entered China. They helped Lipton reach every market corner while building brand awareness among Chinese consumers. Many foreign tea brands sell tea products from abroad using Chinese distributors. However, Lipton invested in building a local factory and hiring local employees. With this strategy, Lipton greatly reduced the costs and localized the brand. It helped the brand to act quickly to meet the needs of Chinese consumers. In 2008, the year of the Beijing Summer Olympics, which was an auspicious time to enter China, Lipton was one of the first international brands advertising on mobile Internet in China. The brand was also one of the first to use e-commerce in the country. Lipton targets Chinese white-collar workers and young adults with its tea bags.

Figure 16 Lipton is now a unit of Unilever. Since Lipton returned to China in the 1980s, it has quickly come to dominate the shelves of major Chinese retail outlets. It dominated the market share in China, but since 2019, competitors have entered the tea-bag industry, reducing Lipton's market share (Unilever, Annual Report, 2019).

Figure 17 How Lipton built itself as a mainstream brand (1) ((Daxue: World Tea News, April 2019)

Tea is traditionally a leisure product. Therefore, many Chinese brands target middle- aged and elderly people who have more leisure time. Most Chinese tea brands sell loose-leaf tea, which can enable people to enjoy brewing tea. Lipton mainly targets white-collar workers and young adults in urban areas. Figure 17 illustrates the brand uses its tea bag as a competitive difference in China's tea market because it is convenient and safer. It also greatly simplified the steps of drinking tea in China (Daxue Consulting).

Figure 18 How Lipton built itself as a mainstream brand (2) (Daxue: World Tea News, April 2019)

Figure 18 allows us to examine how Lipton became a mainstream brand. It brought it's proven standardized design and production methods to China. Lipton bested their competitors by investing in a local factory staffed with local workers, thereby reducing costs of importing the product from abroad. The product was localized which found favor with mainland consumers.

4.11. Lipton is Facing Great Challenges in China

According to the annual report of Unilever in 2019, Lipton's profits decreased. The brand is facing many challenges in China. Lipton's tea is usually inexpensive, so it must keep high sales to get enough revenue. Besides, most Chinese young adults (21-30) crave creativity and novelty. Lipton is losing this huge consumer group. Now, competition in China's tea market is tighter, and consumer preferences have changed. More Chinese competitors are rising, and they have a better understanding of consumers, a more creative package, and advanced marketing (such as KOL, Key Opinion Leaders). But Lipton has not innovated its package and products, and it's less exciting for Chinese consumers.

Figure 19 Lipton is facing great challenges in China (Daxue: World Tea News, April 2019)

Figure 19 illustrates the challenges Lipton faces. First, due to its modest prices, it necessitates large sales volumes to gain sufficient revenue. Also, customer preferences have changed. New-style teas have entered the market giving consumers tea drinking experiences in unique locations as well as on-demand delivery to home or office. Furthermore, Lipton has not innovated in their offerings, their package remains the same, making it less desirable.

Figure 20 Chinese consumers' perception of Lipton

Figure 20 highlights Chinese consumers' perception of Lipton being positive, citing traditional flavors, portability, and convenience. Only a few offered negative comments refer to new flavors.

5. RESULTS AND EVALUATION

5.1. Empirical Findings

These findings will illustrate the empirical results gleaned from both the interview and questionnaire. It will present the demographic results, the effects of Lipton's brand building across China, as well as offer insights into the Chinee consumers' most preferred method of being informed through various marketing communication tools

5.2. Demographic Composition

For a non-biased approach to the interviews, ten Chinese consumers in the twenty to fifty years old age group were chosen by the snowball sampling method. Regarding their work, three were students, two were in state-owned enterprises, two were employed by the university, and three had jobs in private enterprises.

The questionnaire asked about gender, age, occupation, income, and the major factors for selecting tea. The first question identified the respondent's gender; the results are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Respondent's gender (Source: My Survey)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	153	49.7	49.7
Female	155	50.3	100.0
Total	308	100.0	

Table 1, shows the composition of the respondents, male (153), female. (155), 49.7% and 50.3%, respectively. Question 2 was about the respondent's age. In Figure 21, age groups appear in four segments.

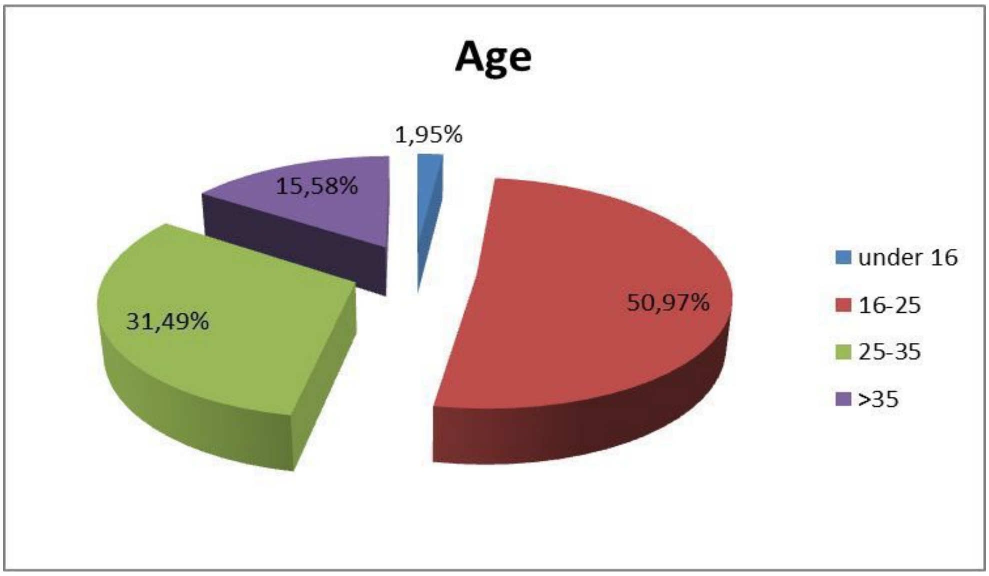

Figure 21 Respondents' age (Source: My Survey)

To be specific, the age group of 16-25 made up the largest proportion (50.97%), while the 26-35 ranked second, making up 31.49%. The over 35 age group comprised 15.58%. There were only six respondents under the age of 16. Question 3 of the survey led us to examine the interviewees' occupations (see Figure 22).

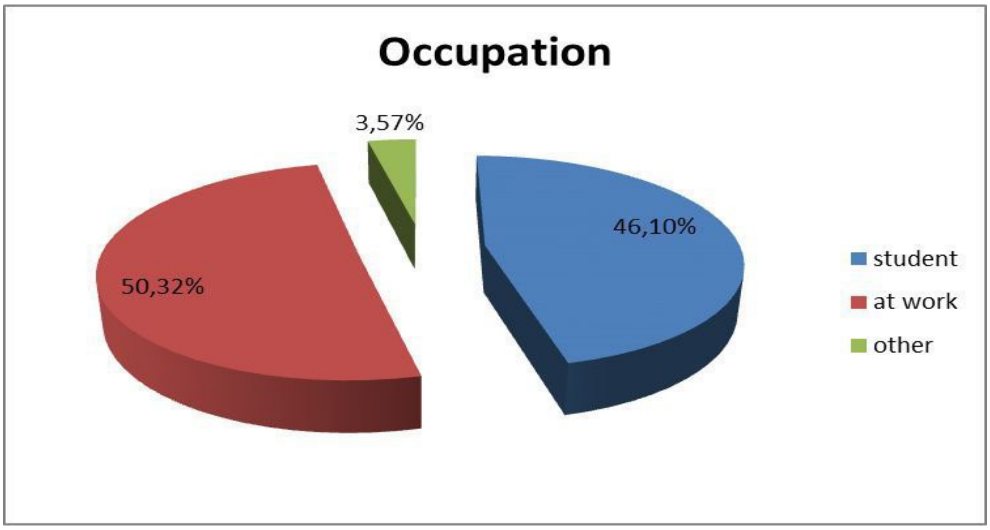

Figure 22 Respondent's occupation (Source: My Survey)

Although the prime target audience of Lipton was a mix of students, business executives and white-collar workers, it was important to have a well-selected and equal weight of respondents to assure the consistency and authenticity of the research. Looking at Figure 22, we can see the number of working people were (155). Of the total, they made up 50.32% of 308 respondents. Students (142), were next and accounted for 46.1%, while the remainder who selected “Other” as the option presented a more comprehensive understanding of the target group. Their income levels appear in Figure 23.

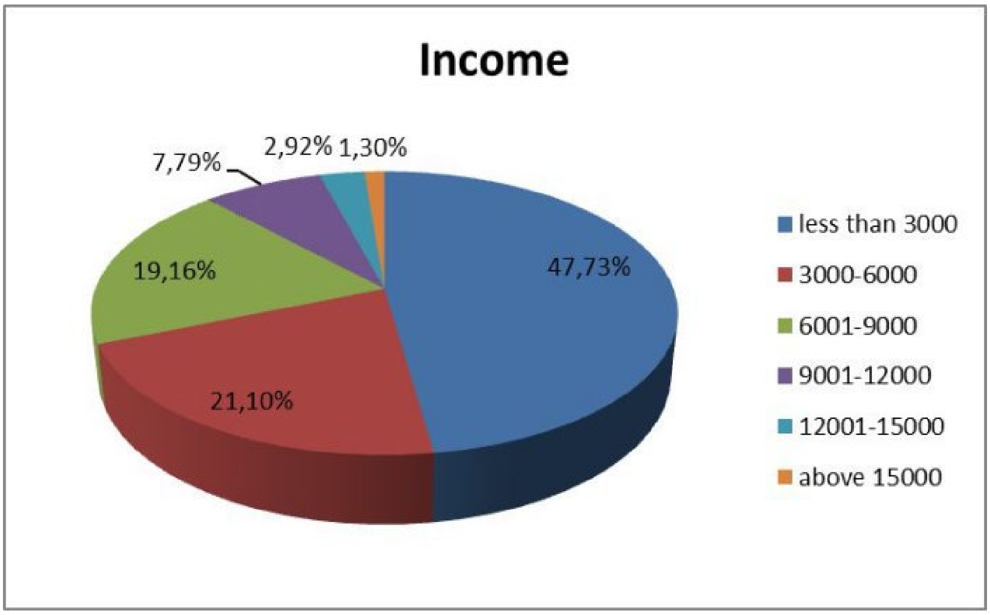

Figure 23 Respondent's income (RMB/month) (Source: My Survey)

Of importance to note is that 147 people, comprising the largest proportion (47.73%), earned less than 3,000 RMB per month. The percentage in the next category, those earning 3,000 - 6,000 per month was moderately higher than those who were a scale above and earned between 6,001 - 9,000 monthly, accounting for 21.1% and 19.16% respectively. As we ascend the income scale, the next level at 7.9% was between 9,001-12,000. Finally, only 2.92% of the targeted group earned 12,000-15,000, while those whose income surpassed 15,000 at 1.3%. The results of this question matched the results of the occupation and age charts illustrated above.

To meet and even surpass consumer demands necessitate understanding their expectations, however realistic or unrealistic they may be. Therefore, when considering creating effective marketing or marketing communications programs, deep thought must be given to recognizing the reception of consumers' aspirations regarding their emotional interests. Therefore, the final question of the introductory information served to pinpoint the critical factors in their selection of tea. This multiple-choice questionnaire was designed to grant the respondents the option to select one to three of the presented options (see Table 2).

Table 2 Factors that influence consumers' tea purchase (Source: My Survey)

	Responses		Percent of Cases
	Number	Percent	
Price	152	24.0	49.4
Taste	267	42.1	86.7
Package and design	57	9.0	18.5
Brand	142	22.4	46.1
Other factors	16	2.5	5.2
TOTAL	634	100.0	205.8

Table 2, revealed that of the total number of respondents, ‘Taste’ had the greatest influence on their buying decisions, 86.7% or 267 participants of the focus group. Price, selected by 152 respondents and which ranked second, amounted to nearly half of the total. Furthermore, 46.1% of the group regarded the brand as a necessary factor. Interestingly, just 18.5% of those interviewed said the package and design should be considered. For the remaining 16 respondents who identified ‘Other factors’ their most repeated replies were: the function of tea on the person, the safety of the tea they would purchase and consume in addition to the origin of the tea.

With tea, an integral component of China's long history and rich culture, the essential and intrinsic approach to judging the tea's quality is through abundant knowledge that comprises profound experience and a particular sensorial approach. In this way, tea can be judged by its color, smell, taste, and even the shape of the leaves.

With increased purchasing power, the Chinese have become more independent in their knowledge, selection, convenience, and consumption of brands, such as tea. Low prices are forgotten; the brand's cost and quality are paramount. Therefore, it’s unsurprising that taste, price, and the brand itself attracted the largest number of respondents to this question (ZIPSER from McKinsey Partners 2022).

Table 3 Brand awareness - Lipton (Source: My Survey)

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	40	13.0	13.0
Yes	268	87.0	100.0
Total	308	100.0	

As illustrated in Table 3, 87% of the survey participants indicated they had heard of the Lipton brand. Furthermore, despite omitting a direct question about the respondents’ awareness of

Lipton during the course of the interview, ten demonstrated varying degrees of knowledge of the product and its promotions, thus indicating a high brand awareness of Lipton across the country. Using the earlier question as a screening mechanism, those 268 respondents who answered "yes" were directed to the following question to pinpoint the platforms that first familiarized them with Lipton. On the contrary, those with negative answers were automatically shunted to the end. (see Table 4).

Table 4 How respondents learned about Lipton (Source: My Survey)

Channels to know Lipton	Responses		Percent of Cases
	Number	Percent	
Ads	207	53.8%	77.2%
Sales promotion	91	23.6%	34.0%
Digital media tools	72	18.7%	26.9%
Other channels	15	3.9%	5.6%
Total	385	100.0%	143.7%

Lipton has, from the outset, stressed that its teas provide a healthy beverage, offering happiness, easy living, and a sense of optimism. Not only that, the company believes that its tea is not just a simple popular drink but it is a means to bring something good, bright, and positive to the lives of its customers. The brand wants to give back and bring happiness not only to its customers but to the planet and the farmers and their families. Also, the brand wants to keep up with time and ensure that its tea tastes will remain desirably and great not for today but in the future as well. Therefore, the questionnaire's rationale was to examine the respondents' s awareness of Lipton and its product with respect to the brands' marcom activities shown in (Table 5).

Table 5 Lipton marketing communication effect (awareness) (Source: My Survey)

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	9	3.4	3.4
Disagree	24	9.0	12.3
Neutral	103	38.4	50.7
Agree	108	40.3	91.0
Strongly agree	24	9.0	100.0
Total	268	100.0	

Question: I'm aware of Lipton brand and product through its marketing communications

The results in Table 5 illustrate that about fifty percent of those involved in the survey agreed that Lipton's marcomm activities afforded them a more significant and meaningful awareness of the brand and product. Interestingly, while 9% disagreed, 38% were neutral. Based on these findings, we can aver that the brands' marketing/media messages' influence on the consumer is not as robust as expected. This points to the fact that the company's marketing and promotional strategies must emphasize and strengthen the brand's benefits and deliver product messages to highlight the benefits of the brand and products, all necessary for the company to present the consumer with authoritative, healthy and constructive evaluations of the brand now and tomorrow.

5.3. Brand Meaning Findings

Reliable, well-planned, and designed marcom helps move products, services, and ideas from the brand to their customers, all the while building and maintaining relationships with consumers, prospects, and other important stakeholders. Communication is vital to marketing since it brings everyone to view it favorably. Therefore, to pinpoint the associations in consumers' minds about Lipton, the respondents were asked to rate the brand's performance and image. On a scale of 1 – 5, a small sample of ten was asked to evaluate the brand's performance. The scoring is illustrated by smiley faces in Table 6.

Table 6 Brand performance – Lipton (Source: My Survey)

	1	2	3	4	5
Convenient					😝
Healthy, caring, energizing				😝	
Good tasting			😝		
Real, natural			😝		

Table 6 conveys an acceptable level of satisfaction among Lipton brand consumers. Among the four categories described in the chart, product convenience received the highest rating, even though it was several customers' first connection with the brand. They went on to explain that their time constraints at work and study were such that they preferred a commodity that was easier to take away and keep. Furthermore, the respondents were pleased that Lipton's marketing communications stressed health benefits to the body and mind. They also stressed the value of Lipton, adding dietary supplements such as antioxidants and vitamins to the tea varieties. Since it is rare to find these key USPs' unique selling points in products in the Chinese market, most consumers find them contemporary, engaging, and worth trying. From the results, one can glean that Lipton's product image is tasteful, but overall, it requires strengthening. For example, Chinese consumers consider the ingredients in tea bags or bottles not as fresh and as authentic as those purchased in bulk, for example, tea leaves.

To pinpoint Lipton's image, methods identified by (KELLER 2009) were used. In referring to free association, the majority of respondents easily identified Lipton as a prominent global brand, coupled with a contemporary and healthy lifestyle offering young mobile professionals like themselves desired icons of fashion and vitality. Also, after having been exposed to the brand's marketing communications -- primarily advertising and sales promotion, the interviewees were keen to describe the brand as innovative, contemporary, effective, and classy.

If we mentioned a key reason for Lipton's image to be so distinct from the typical Chinese tea brands, it would be that Lipton was able to stress its unique selling points in its marketing communications that satisfy the brand's consumers. Having achieved that plateau, understanding and fulfilling consumers' emotional needs would also be to Lipton's distinct advantage.

Since consumers crave a cultural and psychological identity, Lipton tapped into a contemporary lifestyle message that resonated. It knew how to offer mental and material stimuli resulting in distinct psychological values consumers crave (culture, status, personality, being carefree, a willingness to explore, and being daring). Taking the foregoing into consideration, Lipton turned to develop an image that most consumers would value and adopt -- a redesigned consumption habit and lifestyle, thereby forever marrying tea with the activities of the targeted groups. The upshot is that, as a result, there would be a significantly stronger possibility that the consumers would willingly pick a brand that reflects their newly-discovered lifestyle and self-image.

Finally, (Table 7) reveals the Lipton brand image in which interviewees were queried about their attitude towards Lipton's image, but only after viewing and experiencing its marketing communications. It illustrates that the majority of respondents (191) reacted positively to brand image, which constituted 71.2% of the total. However, around 5% of those interviewed opined that Lipton's actions were not gratifying enough for them to form a positive feeling about the brand.

Table 7 Lipton marketing communication effect (emotional stage) (Source: My Survey)

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	4	1.5	1.5
Disagree	10	3.7	5.2
Neutral	63	23.5	28.7
Agree	144	53.7	82.5
Strongly agree	47	17.5	100.0
Total	268	100.0	

Question: Lipton impressed me with its marketing communication.

The conclusions generated by the interview verified in consumers' minds the uniformity of Lipton's image and its position in the marketplace -- over 70% expressed approval of the way Lipton's presented its image. So, in looking at those results, we can conclude that the manner in which Lipton conveyed its marketing communications messages was of great importance to convince the consuming public of favorable similarities linking to the brand’s image. This then made it possible for them to understand Lipton’s mission and vision. However, 23.5% of the respondents were neutral. Finally, despite the overwhelmingly positive response to Lipton’s marketing communications, a great many thought the company needed to improve its messages currently in China. Various suggestions were proferred, and they will be analyzed later on.

5.4. Brand Response Findings

It’s essential to discern consumer reaction to a brand for it to correct, modify and even redesign its approach for the future. Therefore, combining a well-structured and tailored questionnaire and interview is integral to eliciting consumer feelings. Therefore, to follow along this theme, the next question in Table 8 was developed to solicit how the brand appealed to the consumers’ senses.

Table 8 Consumer's overall evaluation of Lipton's appeal) (Source: My Survey)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	7	2.6	2.6
Disagree	19	7.1	9.7
Neutral	81	30.2	39.9
Agree	119	44.4	84.3
Strongly agree	42	15.7	100.0
Total	268	100.0	

Question: I think Lipton is appealing

With 161 people or 60% of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they feel Lipton appeals to their sensibilities, it clearly indicates that when people find something attractive, their feelings are positively reinforced with buying decisions soon following. Irrespective of the large majority of positive replies, 9.7% of the respondents disagreed, while 30% were neutral. The reasons could be varied if one considers that creating a feeling and impression of a brand in consumers' minds strongly relies on other marketing metrics, for example, product performance, price, packaging, and other factors. The interviewees strongly recommended that in order for Lipton to increase its appeal and reinforce its message, the brand must embrace digital media tools and advertise more widely.

In evaluating a brand and its perceived or real quality, which forms an important component of how people evaluate and judge a brand, we turn to the next question discussed shown on Table 9. More than half of the respondents thought Lipton's quality was high. However, 115 respondents, representing quite a significant number, were neither in agreement nor did they disagree.

Table 9 Consumer's overall appraisal of Lipton (quality) (Source: My Survey)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	3	1.1	1.1
Disagree	15	5.6	6.7
Neutral	115	42.9	49.6
Agree	112	41.8	91.4
Strongly agree	23	8.6	100.0
Total	268	100.0	

Question: I think Lipton presents high quality

A major incident that occurred in China some ten years ago was brought up during the course of the interviews, which revealed that pesticide residues were found on Lipton products at that time. This disclosure by the media was referred to as a “Storm in a Teacup.” Greenpeace released a statement claiming that there were 13 kinds of pesticide residues found in Lipton's teas, especially their green tea. And although Greenpeace indicated that although these pesticide residues were in keeping with China's national standards, seven were prohibited for use in the EU (The Conversation, 2018.7.18). Accordingly, Lipton was accused of double standards – one for China, whose oversight was lax, and the other for the EU, where stringent regulations were in place. Lipton was strongly criticized for using China’s “National Standards” as a buffer to continue to save costs, which of course, lowered the quality. This willful neglect, which contravened the population’s right to know, severely damaged the healthy image the brand was trying to convey. The notion of a wonderful product for the contemporary Chinese was shattered.

Although the Lipton brand has found favor among the Chinese, the controversies surrounding the brand have persisted. Having weathered many storms, the questions remain as to the viability of the brand in the Chinese consumers’ view and whether it still has a place in the teacups of the nation. Table 10 shows that 56% of the respondents were in agreement, while those having the opposite view made up fewer than 10%.

Table 10 Consumer general impression of Lipton (whether it is believable) (Source: My Survey)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	9	3.4	3.4
Disagree	17	6.3	9.7
Neutral	92	34.3	44.0
Agree	120	44.8	88.8
Strongly agree	30	11.2	100
Total	268	100	

Question: I think Lipton is credible

A brand's credibility largely relies on how the consumer is regarded and cared for by the organization. In Lipton’s case, the interview responses indicated the reason Lipton brand could still maintain the public’s trust regarding its image and marketing communications was that the company had a skillful method of convincing the consumers of its high regard for them and consistently presented its core ideas of its mission and vision always with the public as the focus. That is, Lipton skillfully shaped its persona as believable and caring based on the trust of the brand for more than one hundred years. For example, a highly appealing, easily identifiable brand and packaging, the range of specialty offerings created especially for different consumers' tastes, and the development of a unique value proposition to fulfill the feelings of the target audience. Finally, an important identifier of the effectiveness of Lipton's communications campaigns rests with the consumer's intent to purchase stimulated by the communication campaigns (see Table 11).

Table 11 Lipton marketing communication effectiveness (Source: My Survey)

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	14	5.2	5.2
Disagree	27	10.1	15.3
Neutral	107	39.9	55.2
Agree	96	35.8	91.0
Strongly agree	24	9.0	100.0
Total	268	100.0	

Question: I sense the need to purchase Lipton through its marketing communication

It's easier said than done to influence consumer behavior. It's a tortuous road, filled with more obstacles than simply promoting the brand or even shaping the beliefs you want consumers to carry in their hearts and minds. As indicated in Table 11, 40%, that is,107 out of 268 respondents were uncertain of their position regarding their intent to purchase. Interestingly, 45% agreed, while 15%, disagreed. These scores indicate that Lipton must continually reinforce its marketing communications strategies especially if it wants to switch massive groups and from a broad demographic to become its newly acquired brand users.

5.5. Brand Relationships Findings

Several strategies can be employed to gauge the relationship between consumers and the brand, for example, examining and monitoring the frequency of purchase and how the consumer interacts with the brand. To assess these factors, the consumers' purchase behavior patterns were measured and are exhibited in the questionnaire (see Figure 24).

When questioned as to whether they bought Lipton, and if so, to indicate how often they purchased the products, 24.25% averred they would consider Lipton as their first choice in the easy-to-prepare-tea product category every time they purchased tea. In addition, 67.16% of the respondents mentioned they would consider Lipton and would purchase it from time to time. The remaining 8.58% indicated they had never purchased Lipton. To sum up, the results illustrate that of those respondents who have heard of Lipton, more than 90% purchased the products. From any point of view, we can see that brand loyalty is significant to any company. And Lipton certainly benefits from it.

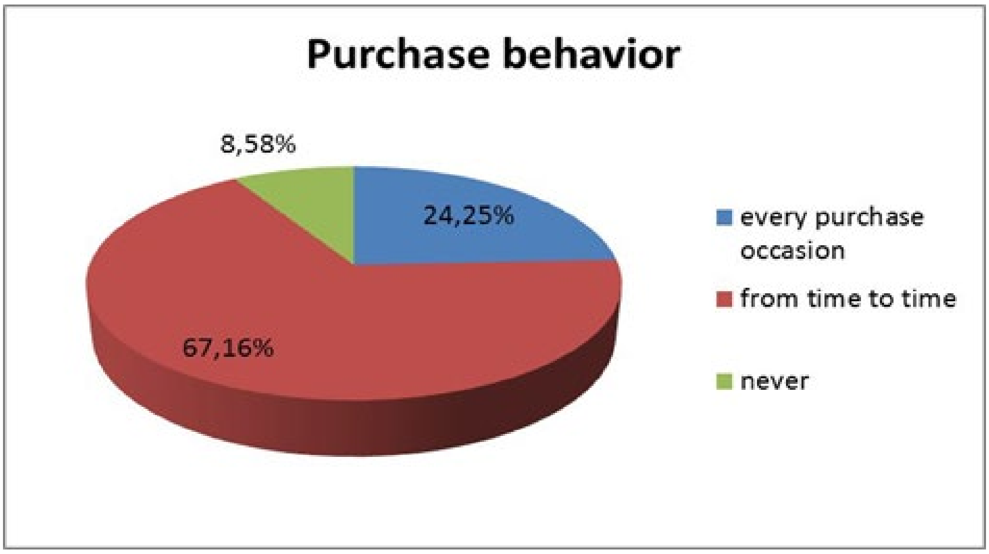

Figure 24 Consumer's purchase behavior towards Lipton (Source: My Survey)

Table 12 below, identifies which Lipton-related activities attracted consumers. The questionnaire, with multiple-choice questions, was designed to offer the interviewees the option of expanding their replies to the questions. So, what we can surmise from Table 12 is that around 55% of the participants took part in at least one of the activities listed in the table labelled "activities and participation." Among them, 112 proposed Lipton to their friends and families; 75 linked to the Lipton brand website; 26 followed the Weibo WeXin official Lipton account. Finally, only six elected to register for Lipton's news bulletins to receive information, samples, or special offers.

Table 12 Lipton Engagement with Consumers (Source: My Survey)

Activities and participation	Responses		Percent of Cases
	Number	Percent	
Visiting Lipton website	75	22.2%	28.0%
Following official Account	26	7.7%	9.7%
Telling friends /Families	112	33.1%	41.8%
Signing up/receiving info	6	1.8%	2.2%
None of them	11	35.2%	44.4%
Total	338	100.0%	126.1%

Several respondents' statements will be quoted to summarize what has been discussed. For example, a college student remarked, "I don't pay much attention to the quality, and to be frank, I can't tell one tea from the other, she replied, overall impression and reputation of a brand and my emotions are what attracts me." A company executive said, "I don't judge Lipton from the perspective of its product, but, without a doubt, it is successful at promoting the brand to a certain degree." Also, a university lecturer quipped, "Lipton has a very different and distinctive brand image compared to our domestic teas. Its packaging presents it as a dynamic, cheerful, and contemporary brand; it can be seen everywhere on campus." Of course, it is not possible to succeed in the Chinese market simply by offering quality. Every brand, known or unknown, does that, and the Chinese-owned tea farms are no exception. However, if a brand can establish its own well-defined image and construct an honest and open dialogue, the consumer will be hooked, despite minor defects that could have crippled the company. This is where the intrinsic meaning of marketing communication lies. Here, then, we can say that Lipton knows how to take command of the market by taking full advantage of a plethora of marketing communication tools to highlight its brand distinctiveness; create a recognizable brand identity; consciously assist people in producing the desired product-related or imagery-based relationships or associations as well as exciting their emotions (warm; relevant; interesting, flavorful, healthy, etc.), all of which builds a firm baseline for eliciting positive responses from the consumer. Once this has been achieved, further strengthening the familiarity between Lipton and the consumer is almost a given.

6. CONCLUSION

I present conclusions based on the previous thesis and hypothesis and a factual and observed analysis, including advice for Lipton and Chinese tea companies, accompanied with a thesis summary.

6.1. Advice for Lipton

As shown, Lipton has a significant presence in the Chinese market due to the brand's ability to create a meaningful presence due, in part, to its creatively designed marketing communications tools, its ability to enhance the consumer experience, to offer a sensorial experience touching the vital elements of sight, touch and feel. Nonetheless, from how the respondents replied to the survey questions, the brand needs improvement to shore up its reputation through a more tailored marketing communications strategy to retain its current consumer base and attract new adherents.

First, consumers testified that the brand failed to offer sufficient information through its traditional marketing communications channels to demonstrate and prove the value of the brand, its product range, and the health and emotional benefits derived from consuming its tea, all indicating low consumer familiarity with the Lipton brand. Although Lipton created a variety of emotional messages, they weren't adequate enough to grab the consumer, thereby leaving them not only with faulty recognition but also misunderstandings of what the brand represents. The results of probing into Lipton uncovered that consumers' confidence in the brand had dropped, pointing to the brands' so-called attributes as quality, taste, and natural features that Lipton failed to highlight. They concluded that the brand must expand the channels, create compelling messages, as well increase the rate of broadcasting qualified information to describe the various facets of the brand's benefits. This, they said, would assist Lipton in enhancing consumer trust. Despite this, the results of the questionnaire indicated that nearly 80% of those interviewed indicated they bought Lipton for their own use.

Second, concerning the brand's less-than-stellar performance in encouraging consumers to engage in the product mix while not forgetting Lipton's marked reduction in their marketing communications messaging during the past number of years, the interviewees expressed a loss of confidence in the Lipton brand. They strongly indicated that Lipton should strengthen its marketing communications, with an increased frequency focusing on the brand's attractiveness. They continued, saying that sales promotion was, in their minds, their preferred communication activity, suggesting the brand increase the level of this marketing activity. Since Lipton can be found in every corner of China, no matter how remote, it's incumbent upon Lipton, a fast-moving-consumer-goods-company (FMCG), with its uncontested retail sales channel to enhance its point-of-sales checkout counter positioning. Sales promotion has proven to be a dynamic resource for promoting the varied Lipton brand offerings since their financial resources overshadow those of local Chinese tea companies.

Third, the interviewees stressed that Lipton should pay more attention to digital media and online marketing for communication activities. If you refer to the chart, digital media engagement hit the last place in how people learned about Lipton. However, with the advance of technology and a more significant swath of the population now focused on receiving information through their mobile apps, pushing information through this media is highly cost-saving and extremely effective. In addition, it would benefit the Lipton brand if its website were designed in such a way as to attract more eyes and play to the consumers' emotions. Finally, digital apps offer the brand a method to tailor and disseminate hundreds of informational messages to their target audiences, thereby increasing the consumer's cognitive deficiency.

Moreover, several interviewees were quick to mention that Lipton's official accounts on WeiXin were practically dormant compared to their active and attractive app on Weibo; however, the site was seldom updated, and their information was outdated, with little consumer interaction. Nevertheless, the results show that more than 55% of the respondents participated in one or more Lipton-themed activities. As an FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) company with a storied history and massive investment from its parent, Lipton struggled to derive obtaining a healthy engagement with their current and future consumers. Still, a more robust consumer, brand awareness, and relationship building require long-term planning and continual support across the entire market. The solution would be for Lipton to more effectively design and target their specific audiences across their various markets to create an unparalleled consumer engagement platform resulting in more loyalty among their consumer base.

6.2. Advice for Chinese Tea Companies

The recommendations for tea farms in China are focused on analyzing specific conditions in the tea market in the country as well as listening to the aspirations expressed by the respondents.

For one thing, marcomm campaigns for tea farm owners must be crafted to appeal to a wider range of consumer groups, particularly the younger generation (Gen Z, for example.) On checking consumption data, young people seldom appear in the analyses since tea drinking seemed to be relegated to their parents and grandparents – something old-fashioned in a youthful, contemporary society. This strongly indicates that the concerns posed by this blossoming young consumer market must be addressed before the company creates and conducts its marketing communications programs, be they in print on online. The research must include the voice of this market, their tea-drinking habits, the factors that would affect their purchases, and the latest tea-drinking trends, to name a few. In addition, in-depth research must consider this market's consumption trends with the redesigned and focused marketing communications reflecting these critical purchasing influences.

In addition, Chinese tea companies must present their unique brand/selling propositions to differentiate each other from their rivals, thereby giving consumers a compelling reason to buy. We stress this urgent change in their attitudes toward marketing because "traditional tea culture" is the sole theme in every Chinese tea farm-related promotion. From the tea farm brand's cultural story to the packaging and advertising, the majority of Chinese tea farms endeavor to create a picturesque image of an ancient and historical culture in the minds of the tea-purchasing consumer. Since the respondents were Chinese, it's understandable they would wish their thousands of years of tea culture could be incorporated into brand communications. However, since the industry lacks innovation by relying on these overused cultural symbolisms, distinct challenges await the local Chinese tea farms to entice and capture this new consumer by delving into their expectations, income, taste, preferences, and the price of related goods. There are many selling points. Successes result from messaging that promises a clear benefit offering something competitive products can't or don't provide. The USP should also be compelling enough to attract new customers. It carefully balances what the customer wants with what the business does well or what it can deliver that the unique way that others cannot.

The USP should appeal to what the customer cares about and clearly differentiate the company's offering from everyone else – a fashionable and healthy lifestyle, benefits to the skin, eliminating fatigue, adding years to your life, etc.

The interviewees also recommended that a youthful spirit, adventure, health, and fashionableness must be recurrent themes in tea-related communications to capture the youthful generation's eyes and minds. Finally, and most important, Chinese tea companies must learn the benefits of the latest social media marketing and promotion and utilize these tools to their collective advantage, improve and understand their learning about the many marketing communication tools and methods now available and figure out how to use them effectively, then create a dynamic mix to achieve the desired results. The respondents urged the tea farm owners to adopt the latest suggested digital tools to influence the tech-savvy consumer allowing the tea marketer to cover large audiences of various ethnicities and ages with fashionable and engaging messages.

7. SUMMARY

To begin, the result of the investigations into Lipton in China reveals a brand recognized by more than 87% who expressed their feelings that the brand has enormous potential, much of it untapped.

Moreover, the results demonstrate that consumers view Lipton as a favorable brand with a positive image. This is borne out by an approval rating of 70%, as indicated in the survey. Furthermore, the consumers' perception of the brand was one of merit with special quality or features, making it easily recognizable and different from other teas in today's crowded and confused tea market in China. Consumers characterized the brand lived up to their psychological and basic needs. In some instances, many portrayed warm feelings towards Lipton, also noteworthy, exciting, and dynamic. Moreover, the emotional connections that Lipton established between consumers and its brand were quite substantial, as confirmed by the high purchase rate and consumer interaction with Lipton-related activities.

Conversely, Lipton must strive to continually improve its marketing communications strategy in China to increase consumer brand familiarity and promote heightened interest in purchasing the products. The challenges would be strengthening consumers' understanding of the brand, enhancing consumer confidence while promoting quality and product credibility, enlivening consumer intention to purchase, etc. In addition, I have tried to demonstrate the tea-drinking habits and preferences in China while pointing out what young entrepreneurs are doing to expand tea as a new personal and group enjoyment style.

My research led me from the China Tea Marketing Agency to China Tea Economic Research, to iiMedia, 36KR, and others to provide the latest statistics on the largest tea market in the world. It appears that consumers are more than willing to experiment with new tea offerings, with more significant numbers attracted to this tea in unique, sleek, modern settings. From the research, green tea leads all others in consumer preferences, followed by black tea, oolong, scented Pu'er, and dark tea (China Customs, CAPAC, 2021).

Since traditional tea drinking is essential to daily life and culture, China's tea sales will maintain an upward trend. Also, with the increase in per capita disposable income and the upgrading of Chinese residents' consumption, the quality of their teas will become an essential factor in the sales and enjoyment of the beverage. The growers and producers recognize this and are cautiously producing certain teas. In addition, new tea entrepreneurs like Xiao Guan also acknowledge the need for specialty teas, pricing them accordingly.

We must remember that China's 1.4 billion people already drink 40% of the world's tea and thirst for more. Moreover, many Chinese consumers prefer higher-quality tea and rely on third-party certification to ensure the tea is organic and sustainably grown.

These same consumers are now more accustomed to paying more per serving than their Western counterparts, with the best tea in China selling at US$ 1,000 for 500 grams (CNBC 2011).

Furthermore, the thesis has pointed out what Lipton did to promote its brand successfully and offered contemporary advice for branding tea in China. Accordingly, the thesis results underscore that the Lipton brand strength has contributed remarkably to its brand building, shaping it to reflect the varying market conditions across the country. By mixing various marketing tools and adopting new approaches to evoke strong emotional reactions to the brand while simultaneously creating advocates as opinion leaders, Lipton stands out while its competitors blend in. Lipton's influence will derive from its ability to fascinate the consumer and reap a new generation of tea drinkers.

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9. LIST OF FIGURES

10.LIST OF TABLES

11. APPENDICES

11.1. Interview Questions:

1. What is your favorite Chinese tea brand; what do you like most about it?

2. What kinds of feelings do you have when Lipton comes to your mind?

3. How fulfilling is Lipton regarding following product performances compared to your favorite tea brand? Choose a scale from 1 to 5, 1= Very bad; 5= Very good.

	1	2	3	4	5
Convenient					
Healthy, caring/energizing					
Real & natural					
Good tasting					

4. Which following expressions would you use to describe Lipton's personality? (Down to earth; innovative; up-to-date; reliable; successful; upper class; charming; outdoorsy.)

5. How do you assess Lipton's marketing promotions you have been exposed to? (From the consistency with its product attributes; the extent to which Lipton's value proposition is in line with yours, whether it is interesting, attractive and convincing.)

6. In your view, what should be planned concerning tea brand-related marketing communication activities?

7. What kind of messages do you expect a tea brand to deliver about the brand or the organization?

8. Which marketing communication channels do you consider to be more effective for optimizing the various tea brands in China today? And for what reason?

9. Please offer up your opinions regarding the marcomm activities of tea/farm companies, in addition to beneficial suggestions.

11.2. Questionnaire in English

TOPIC - Bachelor's Thesis -- Research into Lipton teas and its brand in China

Dear cherished participating interviewees:

I am researching data for my Bachelor's Degree Thesis on teas in China and am looking at how Lipton successfully built its image across the mainland tea market. This questionnaire has been designed to test Lipton's brand resonance in the Chinese market and how the company is regarded by the Chinese consuming public. All personal information collected will be retained as confidential.

Basic Data

1. Gender
   a. Male b. Female

2. Age
   a. Under 16 b. 16-25 c. 26-35 d. Above 35

3. Income level (RMB/per month)
   a. Less than 3000 b. 3000-6000 c. 6001-9000
   d. 9001-12,000 e. 12,001-15,000 f. Above 15,000

4. Your job
   a. Student b. Work c. Other

5. Characteristics to influence your buying tea (Please select as many as necessary)
   a. Price b. Taste c. Package/design/color
   d. Brand e. Other factors _____

Effects of Lipton's marketing and brand resonance in China.

6. Have you ever heard of Lipton?
   a) Yes b) No

(The questionnaire will end automatically if you answer NO)

7. Your awareness of Lipton? (Please select no more than three answers)
   Advertising (TV, outdoor, print ads; product placement; etc.) Sales promotion
   Digital media platforms (social media, website, viral marketing, Weibo, WeiXin, Douban, ByteDance, Xiaohongshu, etc.)
   Other platforms

8. Promotional channel that attract you.
   TV, online, outdoor, print ads; product placement; etc.) Sales promotion (price-offs, coupons, cash refunds, samples, premiums, bonus packs, loyalty programs, contests, sweepstakes, etc.)
   Digital media platforms (social media, website, viral marketing, Weibo, WeiXin, Douban, ByteDance Xiaohongshu, etc.)
   Other

9. Preferred type of advertising? (Select no more than three)
   a. Television b. Online c. Outdoor
   d. Print e. Product placement f. Other______

10. Digital media platforms that engage you? (Select three at most)
    a. Brand sites b. Social networks c. Viral marketing
    d. Micro-blogging e. Other______

11. Motivation to purchase Lipton and/or other teas.
    a. For own use b. As a gift for friends and family

12. Impressions regarding Lipton compared to other tea brands.
    a. Not appealing 1 2 3 4 5 Appealing
    b. Low quality 1 2 3 4 5 High-quality
    c. Not credible 1 2 3 4 5 Very credible

13. Rank the following statements regarding Lipton's marketing/media messages from 1 to 5.

    (1 -- strongly disagree, 2 -- disagree, 3 -- neutral, 4 -- agree, 5 -- strongly agree)

    a. I know more about Lipton 1 2 3 4 5
    b. I have a good impression of the Lipton brand 1 2 3 4 5
    c. I favor the need to purchase Lipton 1 2 3 4 5

14. I buy Lipton
    a. Whenever I go shopping, b. Occasionally c. Never

15. Which have attracted you to Lipton (List as many as required)
    a. Visit the Lipton website
    b. Follow the Lipton official account (on Weibo or WeiXin, Douban, Xiaohongshu)

c. Tell friends and families about Lipton

d. Register for the news bulletin, receive information, samples, or special offers from Lipton

e. None of them

16. Your recommendations to Lipton do to make the brand more successful in China?

Thank you very much for your participation. It is of critical benefit for my success.

DECLARATION OF CONSULTATIONS WITH SUPERVISOR

Name of Student: Wang XiaoFei

Program and specialization: Business Administration and Management specialization in business

Name of Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Taralik Krisztina

First personal consultation

Date and time: 2023. 01. 10.

Topic discussed: Literature review and research plan.

Signature of Supervisor:

Second personal consultation

Date and time: 2023. 02. 22.

Topic discussed: Data analysis and results interpretation.

Signature of Supervisor:

Third personal consultation

Date and time: 2023. 03. 16.

Topic discussed: Smaller corrections.

Signature of Supervisor:

This has to be attached to the Thesis /Diploma thesis

DECLARATION

on authenticity and public assess of final essay/thesis/mater's thesis/portfolio[1]

Student's name:	Wang Xiao Fei
Student's Neptun ID.	NR0XMF
Title of the document:	Consumer Market Research in China. Lipton as a case study.
Year of publication:	08.03.2023
Department:	Business Administration and Management

I declare that the submitted final essay/thesis/master's thesis/portfolio[2] is my own, original individual creation. Any parts taken from an another author's work are clearly marked, and listed in the table of contents.

If the statements above are not true, I acknowledge that the Final examination board excludes me from participation in the final exam, and I am only allowed to take final exam if I submit another final essay/thesis/master's thesis/portfolio.

Viewing and printing my submitted work in a PDF format is permitted. However, the modification of my submitted work shall not be permitted.

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I acknowledge that the electric version of my work is uploaded to the repository sytem of the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Place and date: 2023 year 04 month 19 day

Wang Xiao Fei

Student's signature

[1]Please select the one that applies, and delete the other types.

[2]Please select the one that applies, and delete the other types.

12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

(What a challenging undertaking: reading until my eyes were blurred, researching data from China that is difficult to obtain, trying to find appropriate sources for references and bibliography, researching almost impossible-to-find market data, creating a slide deck to support my written words. Never thought my every second of every day and night would be filled with so much exhausting work.)

I would like to thank a number of people for their immense help and support during the production of this thesis.

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Most importantly, I would like to thank my dear and beloved family, my mother, and father, without whose help I could have never attended university. They will be so pleased since I am the first person in my family's history to have attended university.

My mother and father scrapped and saved every penny from their toiling on the farms in my hometown in Shanxi Province, China. For the past two years, Covid-19 was also a financial challenge for them since China was in lockdown, preventing normal business and travel.

Finally, huge thanks to my professors at HUAL, who opened my eyes and ears to aspects of knowledge that broadened my understanding of business and life. A thank you to all the admin staff who facilitated my wonderful years at the Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

DECLARATION

11.5. Student's Declaration

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Wang Xiao fei hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the thesis I submitted under the title Consumer Market Research in China Lipton as a Case Study is entirely the result of my own work. When I used other authors' works, either printed or electronic, I accurately cited the sources.

I understand that the electronic copy of the thesis / diploma thesis will be placed in the library of the after the defense where the readers of the library will have access to it.

Signed in Gyöngyös on 08 (day) 03 (month), 2023 (year)

Signature of thesis writer:

Wang Xiao fei

STATEMENT ON CONSULTATION PRACTICES

As a supervisor of **Wang Xiao Fei** (Student's name) **NR0XMF** (Student's NEPTUN ID), I here declare that the final essay/**thesis**/master's thesis/portfolio[1] has been reviewed by me, the student was informed about the requirements of literary sources management and its legal and ethical rules.

I recommend/don't recommend[2] the final essay/**thesis**/master's thesis/portfolio to be defended in a final exam.

The document contains state secrets or professional secrets: **no***[3]✓

Place and date: Gyöngyös, 2023. 04. 19.

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