

PERCEPTION OF SUSTAINABLE CHAI-FLASKS & ITS INFLUENCE ON GEN Z'S BUYING BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Disposable chai-flasks have become a prevalent choice for beverage consumption due to their convenience and portability. However, their environmental implications and the dynamics of consumer behaviour remain areas of concern. This study provides a comprehensive investigation into the sustainability aspects of disposable chai-flasks and delves into consumer perceptions and buying behavior of customers. This paper intends to examine the relationship between sustainable packaging, perception of customers and their buying behavior. The study proposes that sustainable packing of Chai-flasks has improved the perception of customers; which in-turn results in an increased buying of these products. In this context, a self-administered questionnaire was distributed among 200 Gen Z respondents who were interviewed and data has been analyzed using Descriptive Statistics. It is found 75% of customers construed that when chai-flasks come with sustainability, it influences their decision to buy tea/coffee frequently online. 60% of respondents agreed that they preferred bamboo made flasks for consuming tea/coffee portably. 42% of the respondents liked the design and appearance of chai-flasks. The findings highlight the significance of utilizing recyclable or biodegradable materials in their production, as well as sourcing these materials responsibly to reduce the ecological impact. This consumer-centric analysis provides valuable insights for manufacturers and policymakers aiming to align product offerings with sustainable consumer choices.

Keywords: Sustainability, Chai-flasks, Buying Intention, Perception, Gen Z.

1. Introduction:

India's one of the largest tea retail chain 'Chai Point' introduced the concept of the heat retaining disposable chai flask in early 2016. The company started the service "chai on call" and used the concept of chai flask for delivering hot beverages to the customer. To this day, many people call it as 'Chai Point Flask'. A disposable flask works well as compared to the other alternatives. Following the success of disposable flasks, many companies shifted to the disposable chai flask quickly. The concept grew like a wildfire and today it is the default option to pack & deliver Tea to customers. Chai point is the first company in India to bring the concept of disposable flasks. This idea struck them when the company noticed customers walking into their outlets with flasks to carry freshly brewed tea back with them. The concept of disposable flask came with lot of advantages for people who wanted to drink hot tea which is portable from one place to another. The evolution of disposable flasks can be seen below:

- **Emergence of Single-Use Packaging:** The use of disposable packaging for beverages, including chai, began with the emergence of single-use containers like paper cups and plastic cups in the early to mid-20th century. This trend allowed for convenient and hygienic serving of chai in various locations (Brovensiepen et al., 2018).
- **Expansion of Fast-Food Culture:** The growth of fast food and quick-service restaurants around the world contributed to the popularity of disposable chai-flasks. These establishments often prioritize speed and efficiency, making disposable containers a natural choice.
- **Plastic Dominance:** In the latter half of the 20th century, plastic cups and containers became the dominant choice for serving chai and other beverages. They were affordable, lightweight, and widely available. However, concerns about plastic waste and pollution later emerged.
- **Environmental Awareness:** In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, growing environmental awareness led to a shift away from single-use plastic. Consumers and businesses began seeking more sustainable alternatives for chai packaging.
- **Biodegradable and Eco-Friendly Materials:** To address environmental concerns, there has been a global trend toward using biodegradable and eco-friendly materials for disposable chai-flasks.

These materials include compostable paper, bamboo, sugarcane, and edible containers, among others (Statista, 2017, 2018a).

As the name suggests, the Disposable Flask is the combination of the Aluminium pouch and the outer covering of the corrugated box. The Aluminium flask is leakproof and spillproof. The Disposable flask is used to pack and deliver hot and cold beverages such as soups, coffee, and tea. The outer corrugated flask is made from the corrugated sheet for which the outer kraft paper's specification is 180GSM*20BF and inside paper specification is 150GSM*20BF. The inside aluminium pouch comes with the plastic spout pouch which can withstand heat up to 120 degrees celsius. It is highly eco-friendly and recyclable to eradicate plastic usage and make environment more natural.

2. Literature Analysis:

Disposable tea flask market size is expected to grow at a significant rate of 8.80% during 2021-2028. Disposable tea flask is the blend of aluminium pouch and outer covering of corrugated box which is spill-proof and leak-proof. The rapid advancements in packaging and wrapping applications is also anticipated to drive market growth. Moreover, the disposable tea flask market is likely to create significant incremental opportunity during the forecast period, due to skyrocketing trends of online beverage ordering in various developing countries. The significance of chai-flasks are stated below:

- **Convenience:** Disposable chai-flasks are typically designed for single-use and are pre-filled with tea. They are easy to carry and dispose of after use, making them convenient for on-the-go consumption.
- **Hygiene:** Disposable chai-flasks are often sealed to maintain the freshness and hygiene of the beverage. This is especially important when chai is prepared in advance and needs to be stored for later consumption.
- **Portability:** These flasks are designed for portability, making it easy for individuals to enjoy chai without the need for additional containers or cups. They are often spill-resistant, which can be advantageous for people who are traveling or on the move.

The sustainability of packaging has changed radically as consumers demand packings made from recycled materials with less wastage (Sandu, 2014). Consumers showed increased willingness to purchase unpackaged and traditional foods in packaging made of glass, paper/cardboard, recycled packaging, etc. Some products use reduced packaging materials instead of products. Plastic packaging (Brovensiepen et al., 2018; Statista, 2017, 2018a). Considering consumer needs and environmental needs, research and development of new plastics and packaging concepts have become an intensive process. Various concepts such as edible films, plastics made from renewable raw materials, biodegradable plastics, intelligent packaging and new recycling options have become more practically applicable and their environmental impact is completely different from traditional packaging materials (Holman et al., 2018; Lange, 2017; Müller & Schmidt, 2019). Explaining the impact of carbon emissions total greenhouse gas emissions, food loss, waste, biodegradability/degradability on environmental longevity, these new or alternative concepts of sustainability have been liked by consumers today.

3. Research Gap:

There are not many viable solutions to pack & deliver hot & cold beverages to the customer except a Disposable Flask. Before the emergence of Disposable Flasks, plastic pouches, plastic, and paper wax cups were used to deliver beverages to the customer. There were more damages and complaints. Disposable flasks proved to be a perfect solution as they can be used for safe delivery of a hot beverage without fears of getting burnt, the container getting soggy, or tea spills. The flask can keep the tea warm for about 30-40 minutes and can be disposed of easily after consumption. Disposable tea flasks are a popular solution to the problem of carrying tea for a group of people. The most common size is a 500ml flask which holds enough tea, coffee for two to three people. A 250ml disposable flask is good for small orders good enough for one person. The 750ml flask is good for office meetings, house parties. Almost all the tea, coffee joints are using disposable flask to pack and deliver hot and cold beverages to the customer. Another tea packing option is to use the silver foil. The silver foil pouch is not a safe option because the hot beverages tend to leach chemicals at high temperatures. As of now, paper flasks are the only viable and sustainable option for the Indian market to pack & deliver Hot beverages to their customers.

4. Materials & Methods:

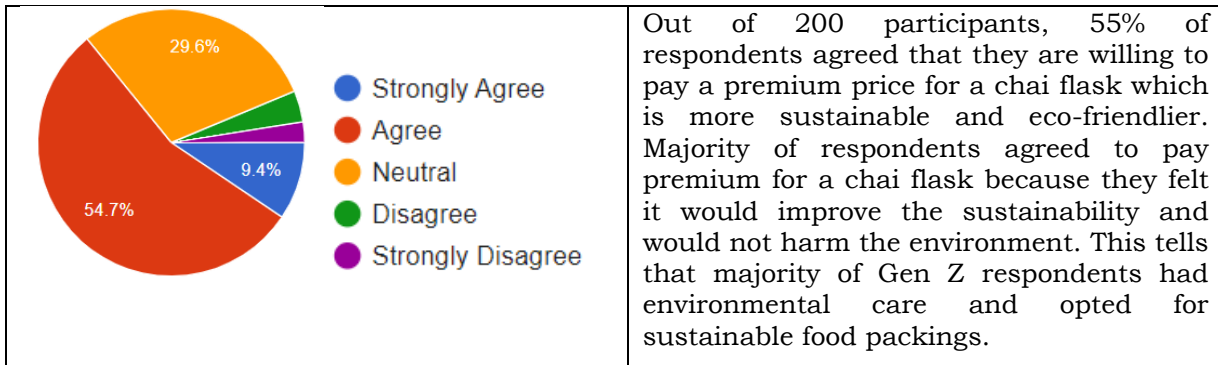
After reviewing scarcely available literatures and forming the research gap, a self-administered questionnaire was formed with three constructs namely sustainability, customer perception and their intention to buy.

The statements underneath were given a five-point Likert scale and 221 respondents were interviewed through Convenient Sampling. Out of these, 200 respondents had filled the form completely and their responses were analyzed using percentage analysis in MS-Excel.

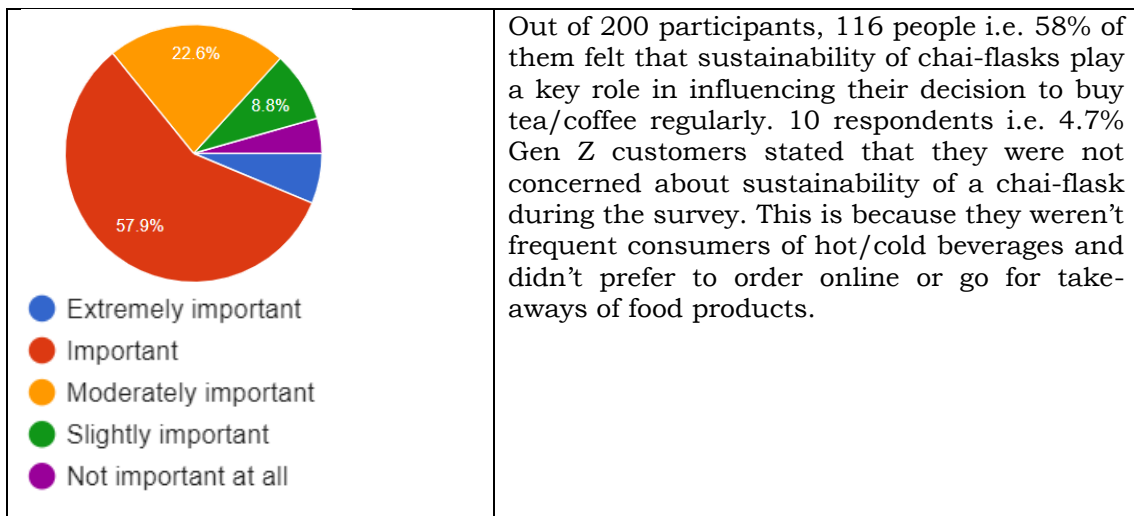
5. Findings:

Based on demographic analysis, it was found that 63% of respondents were males and 27% were females. 91% participants belonged to an age group between 21-25 years, 5% below 20 years of age and 4% fell amidst 26-30 years of age. The statement-wise analysis is given below:

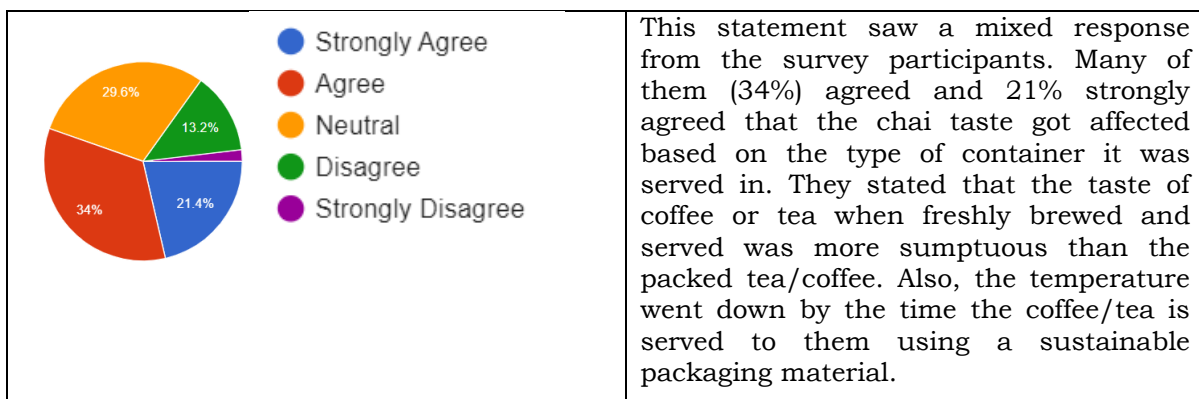
1. I am willing to pay a premium for a chai-flask that is more sustainable or eco-friendly.



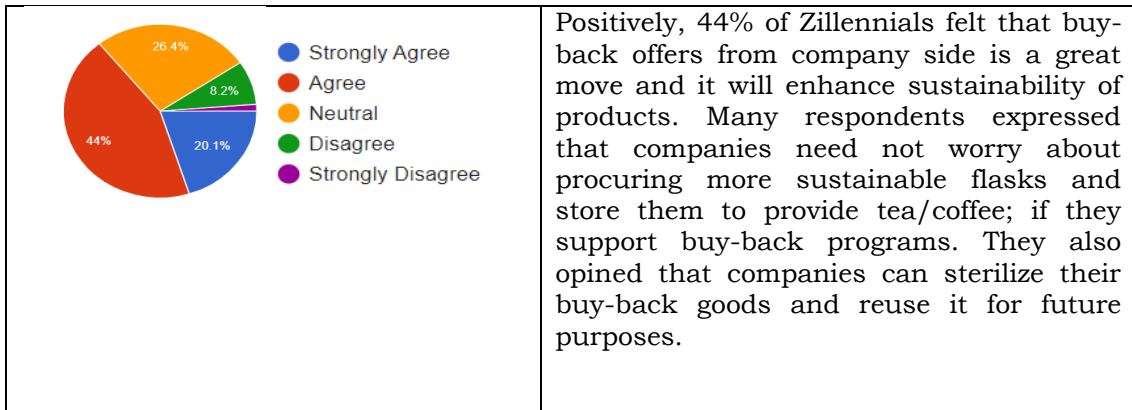
2. The sustainability of a chai-flask is important in my purchasing decision.



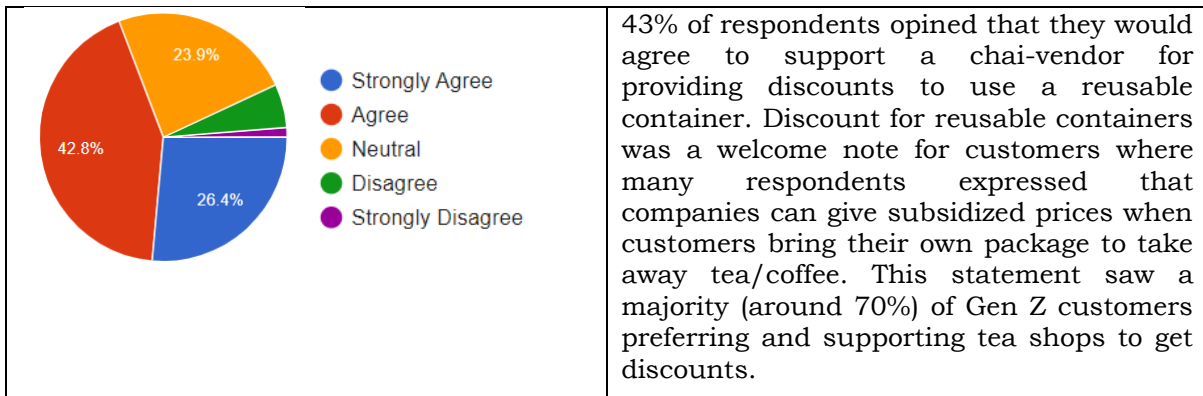
3. I think the taste of chai is affected by the type of container it's served in.



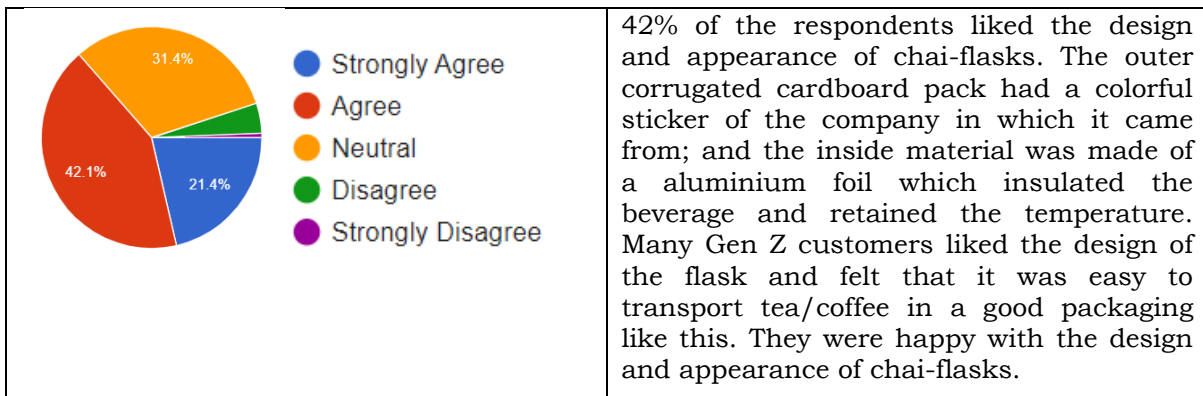
4. I feel that companies providing take-back or buy-back offers for their chai-flasks improves sustainability.



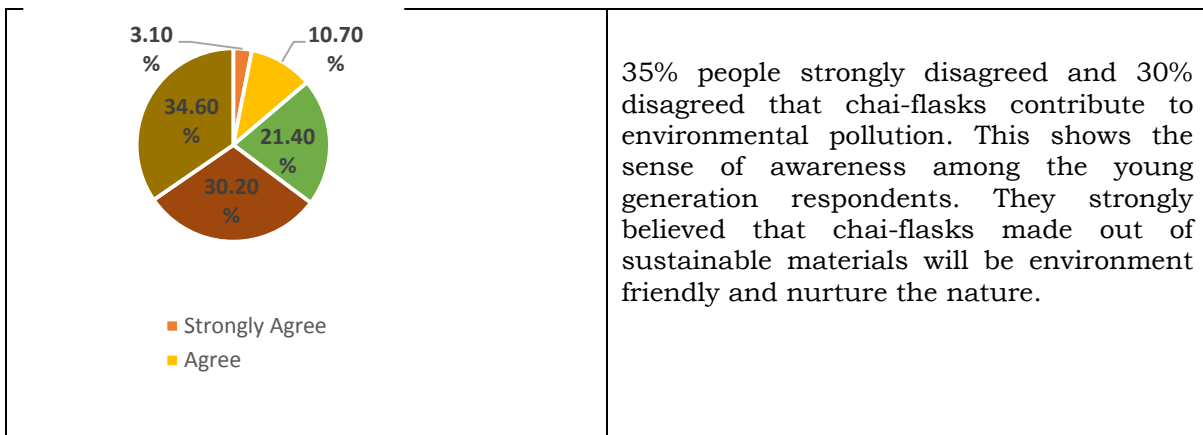
5. I would support a chai vendor if they offer a discount for using a reusable container.



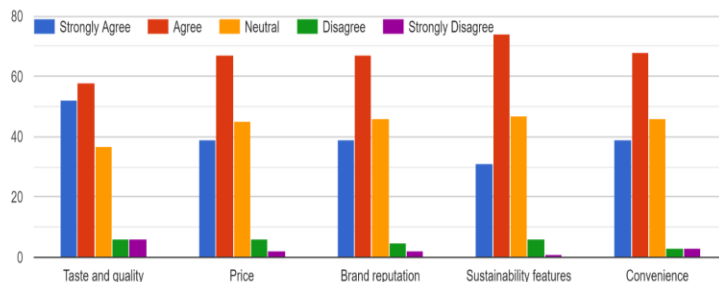
6. I find the design and appearance of disposable chai-flasks to be appealing and attractive.



7. I think disposable chai-flasks contribute to environmental pollution.

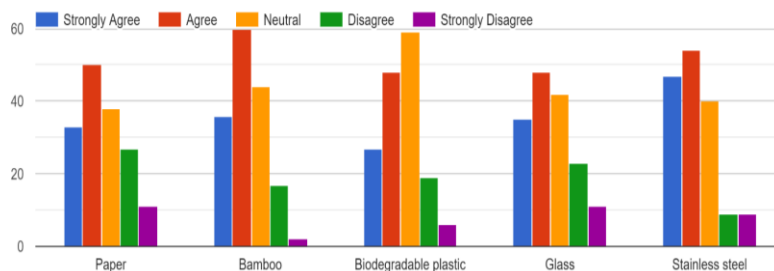


8. What factors influence your choice of buying chai served in disposable flasks?



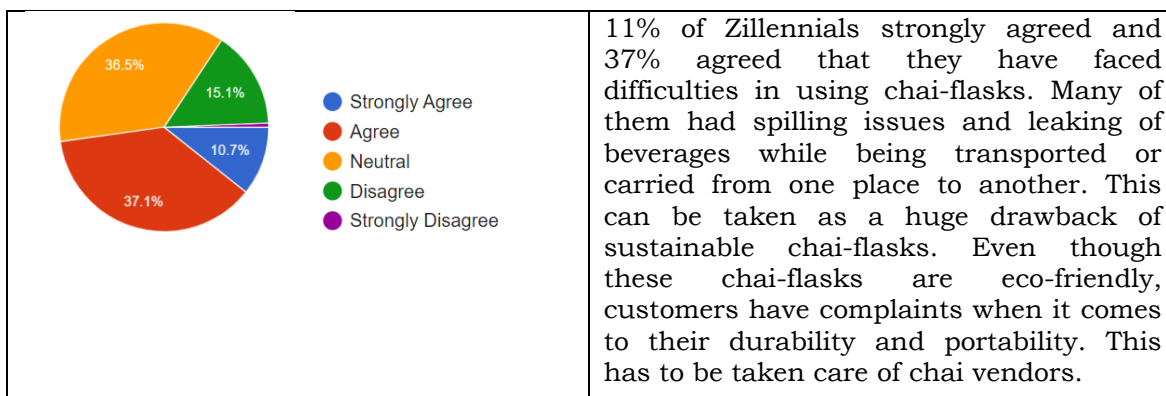
Based on higher-order ranking, Zillennial customers opined that sustainability is the most influencing factor that impacts their decision to buy chai in disposable flasks. Among all the other options given, 75% of customers construed that when chai-flasks come with sustainability, it influences their decision to buy tea/coffee frequently online. Likewise, the next influencing factor is convenience. 68% of respondents agreed that chai-flasks are convenient to use and comes in handy/portable to carry from one place to another. The third factor which impacts the customers are brand reputation and price. The respondents gave equal weightage of 67% to brand and price. They opined that they can buy a chai-flask from stores like chai-kings or chai-wale without any doubts in mind as they have good quality products and are also easily affordable. The last influencing factor was taste. When it comes to taste, 58% of respondents agreed that taste also influenced their decision to buy chai-flasks. This isn't logically right, but when it is thought from a customer's perspective, the customer feels that they have already consumed chai from a branded outlet; they have already tasted it and experienced the Flavor. This forms the reason why taste has been the last factor to influence the buying decision of customers.

9. What type of material do you consider the most sustainable for chai-flasks?



60% of respondents agreed that they preferred bamboo made flasks for consuming tea/coffee portably. Albeit the highest score obtained by biodegradable plastic is 60%, it states a neutral response of zillennials customers and can't be quantified to a great extent. The next rank is obtained by stainless steel. 55% of respondents agreed that they prefer stainless steel flasks to consume chai. They feel it is highly durable and spill-proof; but it is not economic in terms of pricing for the companies. 50% of respondents opted for paper-made chai-flasks and 48% chose chai-flasks made of biodegradable plastic.

10. I have encountered issues with the functionality of disposable chai-flasks (e.g. leaking, spillage)



6. Conclusion - Global Market Scope of the Chai-Flasks:

The global disposable tea flask market is anticipated to witness a market value of US\$ 920 million in 2023 and is expected to harness a market value of US\$ 2150 million by reflecting a CAGR of 8.8% in the historical period 2018 to 2022. On the other hand, attractive logos and labels printed on the top of disposable tea flasks can easily attract millennials and zillennials which is expected to boost the market growth. Besides this, the rising trend of online beverage ordering in the Asia Pacific and North America region is projected to create demand for the disposable tea flask market in the forthcoming period. Also, global organizations and initiatives by local governments of paper-based packaging is expected to boost the disposable tea flask demand across the globe. The disposable tea flasks are likely to create substantial incremental opportunities in the future, owing to skyrocketing trends of online beverage ordering in various developing regions. This disposable tea flask market study has provided details of new recent developments, value chain optimization, market share analysis, impact of domestic and localized market players and has analysed opportunities in terms of emerging revenue pockets, application niches, geographical expansions and technological innovations in the market.

Likewise, with highest tea consumption rate in India and China there is vast opportunity for disposable tea flask market to expand rapidly in the Asia Pacific region. The market in Asia-Pacific is expected to be fastest growing region with CAGR of 7.9%. Chai Point is the first company in India to develop and launch this exceptional heat retaining use and throw flask. The team at Chai Point saw the need to invent this flask based on consumer demand for tea delivery at their offices and the scalability and hygiene that is missing in conventional thermos-based chai deliverables. This new entrant will also be launching a 350 ml heat-retaining flask unit and intends to call it the 'Uni'. The driving factor behind the 'Uni' is to give individual customers the incentive to order Chai in this flask format. Based on these developments emerging in the field of chai-flasks, chai-flasks are expected to become the most feasible option for all sects of people in future. Hence, this study proves to be highly beneficial in common interest.

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