

I wish to thank all those I met on my tea journey, people who unbidden nevertheless helped me a lot. Many thanks also to Doctor Alison Prendiville and all my classmates in MDes, for caring for me after I changed to this course and who have taught me so much about service design, convincing me of its social value. I am deeply appreciative for every moment of my eight months of study in MDes.

The Tealeaf Story:

Major project report
MDes 2012
Wenbo Ai



**A service design
concept exploring and
communicating the
cultural significance of
Chinese tea.**

Summary

This project, based on a personal journey through the tea producing heartland of China, explores, communicates and activates the cultural significance of Chinese tea among tea drinkers.



**PHASE ONE:
Formative
Problems**

The research started by investigating a group's drinking behaviour. Most of those in the research group drank tea made from tea bags not tea leaves. Even modern Chinese tea drinkers do not know much about the ancient Chinese tea ceremony. Instead they frequent coffee shops and "milky" tea shops that are everywhere. It is rare to find a traditional Chinese tea shop but the search repays the effort since such a shop expresses a great depth of tradition and philosophy – the culture of tea in China is an art rather than a mere refreshment.



**PHASE TWO:
Find evidence**

To locate Chinese tea culture I began a research journey, a journey following a modern tea route through China for a month. I visited green tea and dark tea plantations, tea museums and teahouses. My primary research methodologies included interviews, surveys, and observational research leading to analysis through customer journey maps and co-designing. Ancillary research included in-depth reading about the Chinese tea ceremony and a workshop at the Samsung Art and Design Institute (SADI) that promotes herbal tea culture in South Korea. Both secondary and primary research allowed me to build a complex yet clearer picture of the Chinese tea culture.

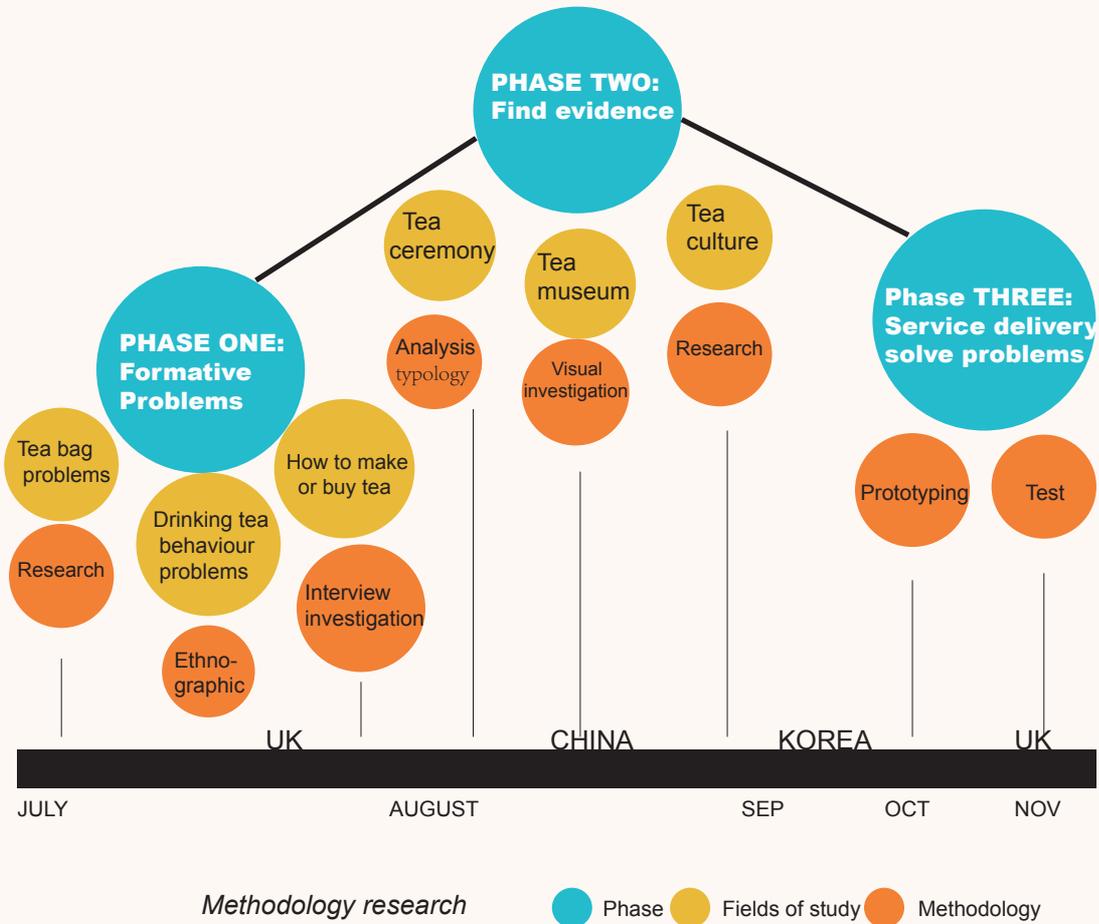
Based on the research, design methodologies – storyboard, rough prototyping and blue print – helped me develop a clear design concept.



**PHASE THREE:
Service delivery
Solve problem**

The final service delivery is to link up with the China Tea Museum in Hangzhou: it explains how to promote tea culture among visitors and others through museum services. This promotion explored how to attract tourists to the tea museum, how to learn and enjoy Chinese tea culture and, ultimately, share what they have learnt with friends, colleagues and family.

TIME TABLE OF THE PROJECT



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Introduction

This project starts by investigating people's tea drinking habits. Drinking tea, as an activity in Chinese cultural and daily life, is deeply important. Firstly, it solves many common physiological problems, relieving thirst and providing needed nutrition. Secondly, it helps psychological problems – for example, drinking tea can relieve fatigue and strain. Thirdly, tea may even have a spiritual benefit, a kind of purification expressed in its art. Sadly modern tea drinking behaviour only seems to address the first problem while the others are obscured by the pressures of modern life.



Through four investigations in offices and Chinese tea shops, certain difficulties presented themselves:

- Tea bags are the first choice for most people simply because of the convenience. This reflects wider eating and drinking behaviour, governed by speed and convenience but which are also far from healthy.
- It is increasingly unusual to find a traditional teashop in China. These are replaced in popular culture either by coffee or “milky” tea shops that serve a product that is recognisably western. The traditional Chinese tea culture seems to be vanishing under the onslaught of a pressurised, consumeristic modern society.



WHEN DRINKING

- Where does tea come from ?
- How does tea grow ?
- How is it processed ?
- How does traditional Chinese tea compare with modern tea bags ?
- Which is healthiest? Do people consider alternatives to the tea bag ?



Most people rarely if ever pose these questions when they drink tea.

A key aim was how to use service design to promote Chinese tea culture, bringing it back into the daily lives of ordinary people and changing both their drinking behaviour and their philosophy of use. I needed, first of all, to describe traditional Chinese tea culture – the art behind the Chinese use of tea – and consider how people can feel so peaceful and relaxed when they use the tea ceremony. With this question in mind, I started my tea journey through China in August 2012.



1.0 Data collected Methodology

1.1 Primary research :
Tea journey in ChinaP9

1.2 Secondary research:
Tea ceremony book/Korea tea journeyP74



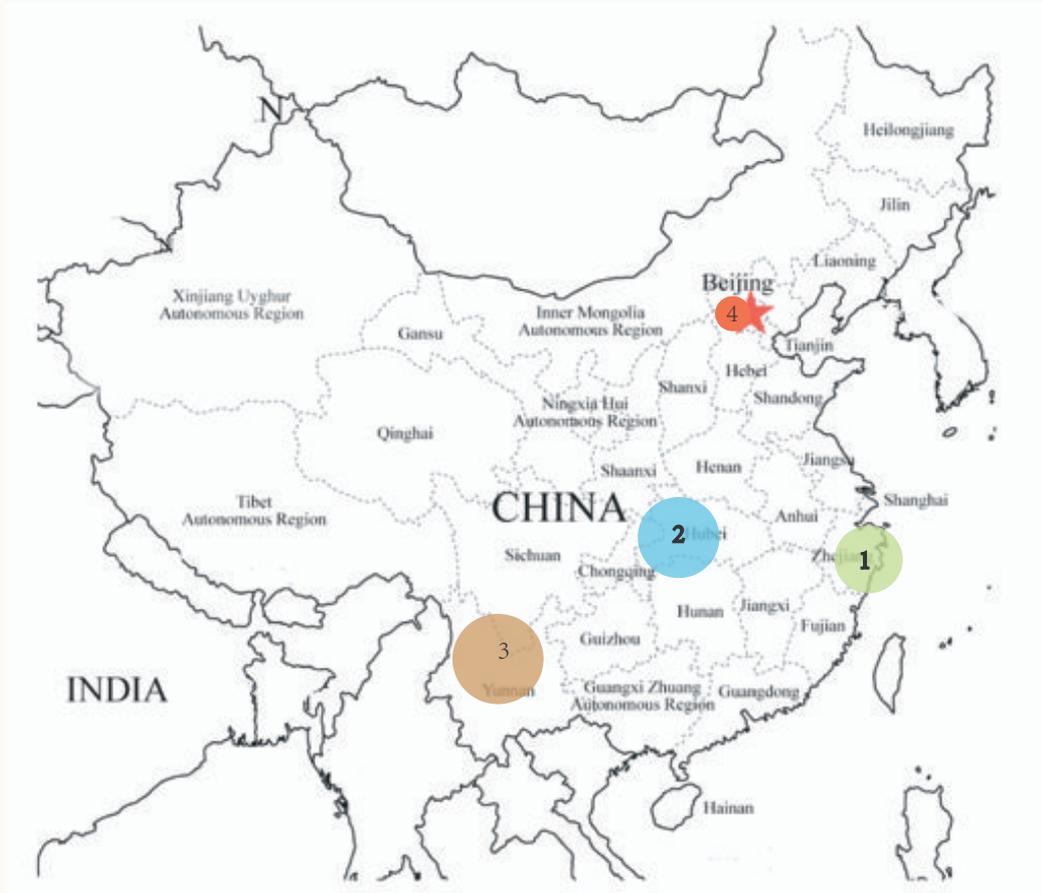
Primary research: Tea journey in hina

An aerial photograph of a tea plantation, showing rows of green tea bushes in a grid pattern. A large white aircraft wing with multiple engines is visible in the upper left corner, flying over the plantation. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

1.0 Data collected / Primary research

TEA JOURNEY DIARY VISUAL SUMMARY

JULY-AUG 2012



JOURNEY MAP



GREEN TEA

The provenance of green tea, green tea is exported from here to Korea and Japan.



TEAHOUSE

A traditional tea house which promotes health and the philosophy of the tea ceremony.



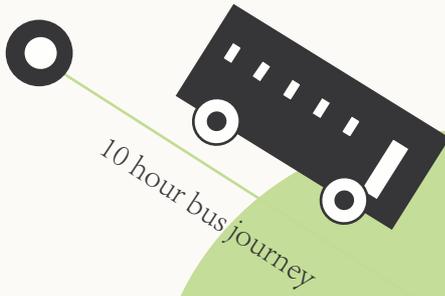
DARK TEA

The provenance of tea in the world, dark tea exported to India and UK.



OFFICE

An insurance company which uses the tea ceremony in their office.



10 hour bus journey

1 杭州
HANGZHOU

GREEN TEA 西湖龙井

Place of research/调查地点

Shuangfeng tea farmland/ 双峰茶园

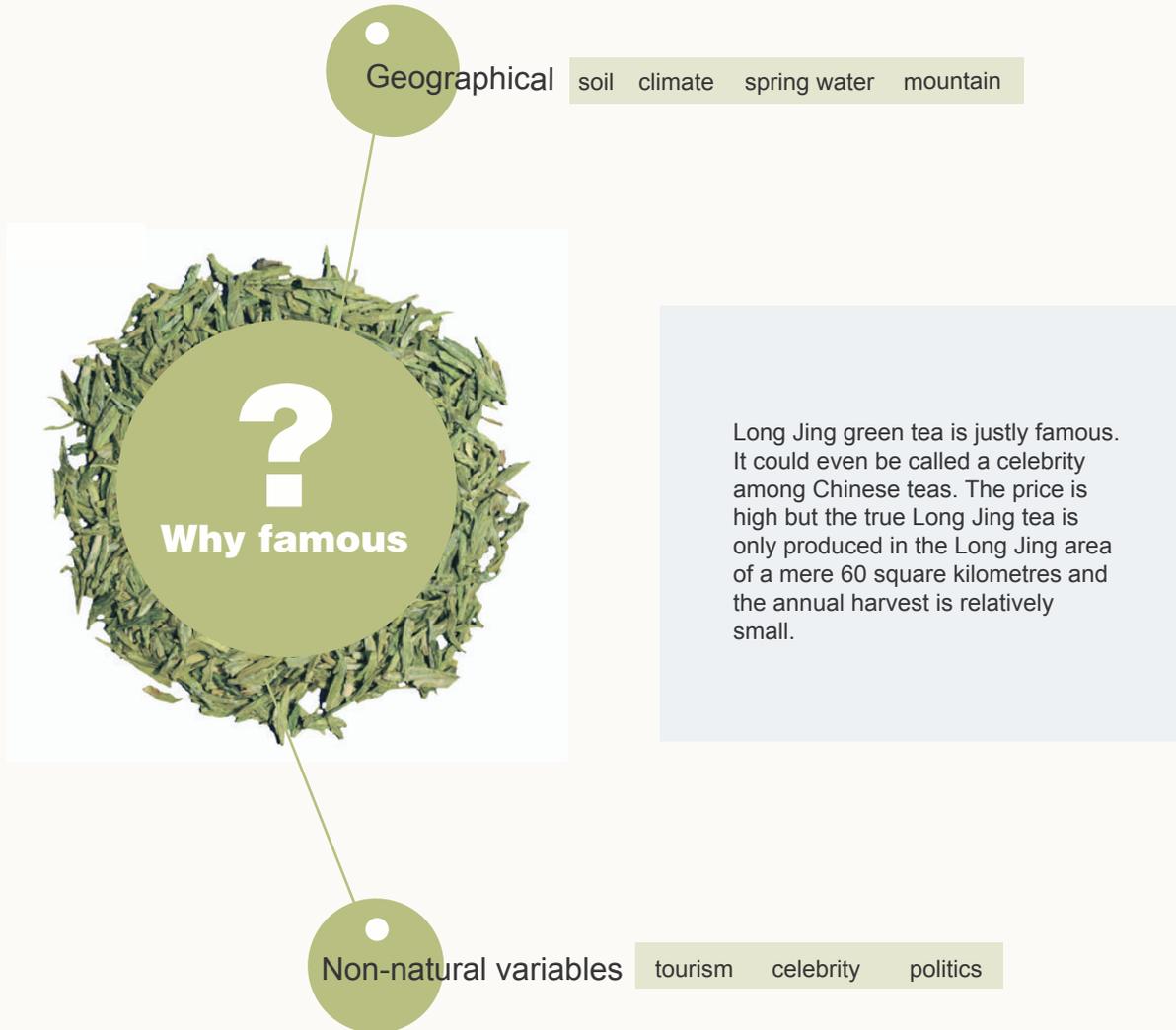
China National Tea Museum/中国茶叶博物馆

Longjing village / 龙井村

Shangmaojiabu tea farmer home / 上茅家埠 农家



Hangzhou, close to Shanghai, belongs to the Chinese Yangtze River Delta Economic Zone. This region has a high population density yet is also famous for an ecological niche that contains Long Jing – the Dragon Well – located in central Hangzhou. Long Jing has been made famous in myths and legends because of its stunning landscape and its production over millennia of green tea. Even though Long Jing is located in an active economic development zone its natural ecology is highly protected. Possibly, this is one of the few peaceful places left in the region which is why the tourist industry has been successfully encouraged making Long Jing a sought-after tourist destination.



Shuangfeng Tea farmland



Investigation locale: Shuangfeng tea farmland
Investigation time: 9:30 am 7th August,2012
Investigation aim: Understanding the tea growing environment

Shuangfeng
village



Much like champagne – available only from that region of France – Long Jing tea is made special by its quality, rarity and provenance. Long Jing green tea has a 1,200-year history. Different regions have different tea qualities and tastes because environments differ: the heart of Long Jing is Shuangfeng with its tea museum. There I learnt that soil is the most important factor for tea quality..



INTERVIEW

I met two tea farmers – a husband and wife – who work the tea fields. They came to Long Jing to plant tea when they retired. They chose to live in this beautiful and peaceful place because it suits them better now they are older and because they enjoy having a healthy outdoor activity to keep them busy. The man was pruning to keep the tea trees at an optimal height making it easier to collect the shoots. He told me he drinks four large bottles of tea everyday – at least equal to four litres – and the tea is made from the powder left after the tea leaf has been fired. They brought a large flask of tea with them whenever they went out to work on the plantation. This kind of flask is very common in China: sometimes older people take vacuum flasks when travelling, recognising the health benefits.

Interviewee: tea farmer

Interview time: 9:30am 7th August 2012



Interview content

He picked one tea shoot for me, explaining that this is the best part of the tea tree which, generally, is the source of the tea. This tender young leaf is like a new life that has sacrificed itself to improve human wellbeing.

Why should such young shoots be chosen to make tea? Since they grow at the top of the tea trees they receive more sunlight and are so delicate that their taste is both mellow when drunk and a little sweet as well as having a beautiful fragrance.

The window of opportunity to pick the tea shoot is small: if the farmers do not pick it early, when it matures the flavour becomes bitter. The more delicate and smaller the shoot the more delicious is the flavour – and also the higher the price. In spring, tea trees sprout quickly, making the season busy for tea farmers who must hire temporary pickers to help with the harvest. The excellence of the tea leaf depends on its being picked at this crucial time: it is made more precious by the shortness of the optimal period.

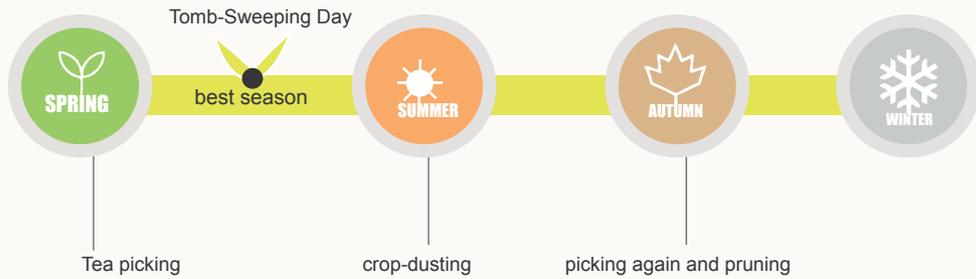




Pesticide Spraying



A tea farmer was spraying pesticide in his fields while, at the same time, another was harvesting leaves in adjacent fields. To understand why they were still picking long after the ideal period in late summer, I interviewed one farmer. She told me that while summer is for protecting not picking tea, nevertheless Long Jing tea's fame put it in great demand and the spring harvest simply does not supply that demand which is why she still picked tea beyond the usual season.



PICKING TEA



The ideal period for picking tea is before Tomb-Sweeping Day(清明节) , 5th April. This is the when nature begins to revive in this region of China, when the tea shoots are the most tender and soft. The summer – with its high temperatures and crop-dusting to counter insect activity – and autumn seasons concentrate the leaf flavours making the tea heavy and strong. After picking for the last time in autumn a farmer will prune the tea bush back to the appropriate height. Then the bush will rest, absorbing energy over the winter, waiting for spring to revive it.



Visiting a teafamer's home

Investigation locale: No.201 Shangmaojiabu teafarmer's home
Investigation time: 6:00pm 8th August,2012
Investigation aim: Understanding tea better

A farmer talked at length about the Long Jing tea market: "The best leaves, produced in the best districts and picked at the best time, are quickly sent to satisfy the luxury market. The tea bought in the local Long Jing shops can scarcely be called local tea. Not even the tea drunk in the local tea shops. Tea produced elsewhere is brought in to this beauty spot to satisfy demand. People always think the tea is from Long Jing when they buy it locally: but that's not true."





Then he took out a cotton bag that stores the tea and said: “the simpler the better. Putting the leaf into a cotton bag is the best way to store it, with lime under the bag to keep it dry.”

He also showed himself deeply aware of environmental protection issues:

“The best time to pick tea is spring, before May. After this, insect pests become a serious nuisance. If you want a good harvest you must crop-dust, use more pesticide. Modern people have no conscience because you cannot make money with a conscience. People only think about money.” He also said that the development of tourism has broken the precious and delicate ecological balance. “The more people that come to one small place the more the local peace will be broken.”

Generally speaking, Long Jing tea is made using pure local spring water. Making tea like this is vital to those who know about tea. Then he pointed out that “actually, the local spring is already contaminated and tourists who know nothing about this problem still drink the tea made using that water in the tea shops.”

HOW TO PACK TEA?



When visitors want to buy tea, he takes the leaves from the cotton bag and put them into a plastic bag. After weighing then sealing the tea visitors choose between different tea boxes. These can be aluminium or porcelain and have been bought elsewhere – there is no information on the box except the name – and these boxes have nothing in common with the product.

Tea products bought at the farms should keep their rural styles as a mark of their provenance and honesty. It seems ridiculous – even slightly dishonest – to decant the leaves from a plain cotton bag into a commercial box which does not reflect the origins and integrity of the tea itself.



What did I learn at the farm?



What is the tealeaf and when is it picked?



Soil is the most important factor for tea growth



Traditional packaging is best!



Co-designing with tea farmers

CHINA NATIONAL TEA MUSEUM



Tea farmland surrounding the museum



Tea museum

The China National Tea Museum is located in Shuangfeng, on Longjing Road in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. It occupies 3.7 hectares contained within a wider 8 hectare area undergoing construction. The special subjects are tea, its cultivation and the unique Chinese cultural practices that surround its consumption. The museum nestles among the Long Jing tea plantations and inside there are flower corridors, reconstructions of hills, ponds and waterside pavilions all integrated into a single, contiguous exhibition. It is in a park to the south of the Changjiang – also called the Yangtze River – where there is pure air and the visitors can feel close to nature.

Tourist map



CUSTOMER JOURNEY MAP

1

PRE-SERVICE



- The Main building is hidden among extensive tea.

Hangzhou is famous for its green tea, grown around the West Lake. Tourists visit Long Jing village but few know of the tea museum. I asked ten tourists I met in Long Jing and only one had heard of it. Since I had chosen tea for my project my tutor suggested I should visit the tea museum. Without her initial guidance I would not have known about the museum, as there was no information directing visitors to this attraction apart from localised notice boards near the museum.

2 SERVICE PERIOD

Room 1

Room 1:

Tea history and culture in each period - from the ancient discovery of tea to the present.

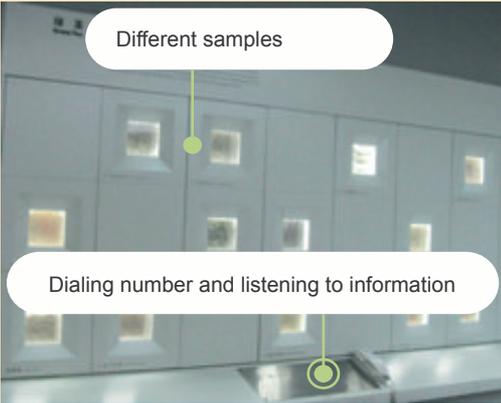


Room 2

Room 2:

Samples of tea and introduction

Vistors can use this phone to dial the number of the tealeaf they want to know moreabout.



- Source area information
- Colour of tea
- Tealeaf after drinking

Room 3

Room3: tea knowledge - making tea, instructions and health benefits

Interactive technology to help visitors understand.



Room 4

Room 4: Exhibits



Courtyard



After moving through the exhibitions within the museum, visitors leave the last room and enter a beautiful traditional courtyard through which they walk to the teahouse. Generally speaking, visitors should have a rest after their visit to the museum because there is much to see and far to walk. For this reason, the museum provides what is an excellent and appropriate service, presenting visitors with a suitable culmination to their experience with a relaxed enjoyment of tea taken at a traditional teahouse.

Teahouse



For more research from the China National Tea Museum, see Appendix A (pages 113-116)

Tea packaging in the Qing Dynasty



Artifacts



Compared with museums in the UK – often with a range of visitor-centred communications such as are offered in the British Museum, for example – the souvenir shop, informative guides and follow-up service of Chinese museums in general are poor or inadequate or even non-existent. The generic problem of Chinese museums is clear at the China Tea Museum.





Tianyiju is both a traditional Chinese style and modern life style teahouse, located in Wuhan. The concept behind the teahouse can be distilled into four interrelated activities:

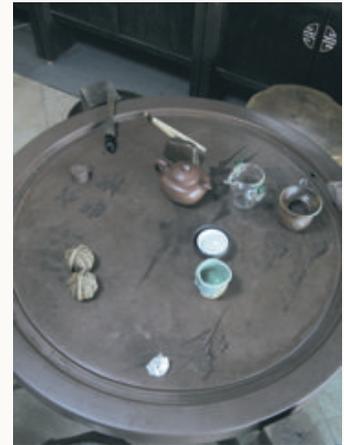
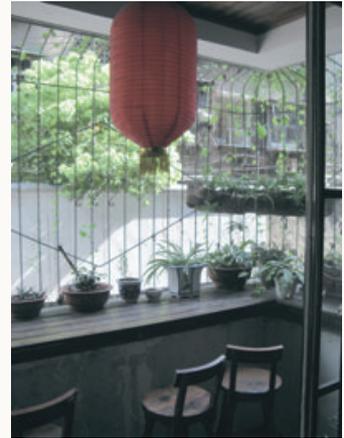
- Explanations about using tea in the preparation of food. The health benefits of using tea in selected dishes makes for unique culinary experiences.
- How to prepare and drink tea in a scientific and relaxing way.
- Workshops that cover how to deepen the experience of tea. This may include the ritual surrounding tea and workshops about how to preserve use tea for health. explain how to prepare, taste and benefit from tea.
- Enjoying the tea with concerns a return to a more spiritual recognition of the benefits of drinking tea together without distractions. This may be something the modern world – with its social media and pressured lifestyles – is losing or has already lost.

The aim of the teahouse is not just to let customers drink tea and rest but also to cultivate an aesthetic – even moral – experience. The teahouse decoration is based on feng shui and expresses aspects of traditional, self-reflective Chinese philosophy.

1

PRE-SERVICE

The Tianyiju teahouse is comparable in some ways to the Monmouth coffee shop in London. For more than thirty years, in Monmouth Street, it has grown by word of mouth that responds to the quality, provenance and preparation of the coffees offered as well as the knowledge of those working there. In a similar way, the Tianyiju teahouse is known to provide real tea in a traditional environment. When the teahouse first opened, the shopkeeper invited his academic friends. Once they had visited and enjoyed the experience, they recommend it in turn to their friends. They generated their own market through word of mouth and soon had a settled cohort of customers.



2

SERVICE PERIOD

Healthy drinking



MAKING TEA



The teahouse has two basic services: tea can be ordered at any time and food can be taken at meal times. Other specific activities such as workshops or lectures are held at weekends.

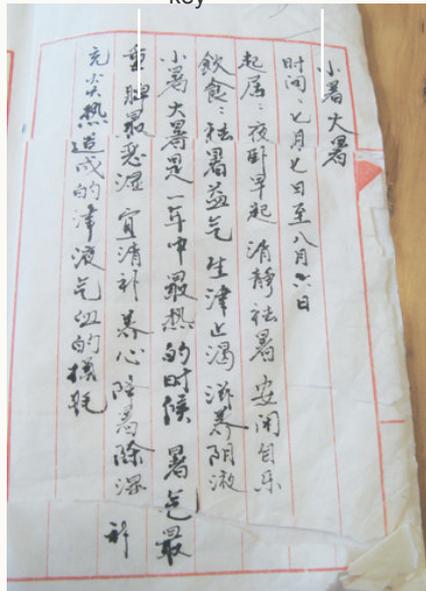
For their healthy cuisine, tealeaves are used as a basic ingredient for most dishes. When customers open the Tianyiju menu – designed like a traditional Chinese book – the contents are calligraphically presented on rice paper. On the first page diet is mentioned, with a suggestion that it should depend on the solar season. There are notes for people’s fitness routines at different times of the solar year. For instance, one menu is used in the summer and explains how to adjust individual yin and yang based on an appropriate balance of eating and sleeping.



Drinking tea one hour before the meal

Healthy eating

- key
- solar period



Steamed fish with tealeaves



Steamed rice with tealeaves



3

POST-SERVICE

Post- service

If a customer asks for membership of the Tianyiju teahouse, they will get a discount on the tea they buy. Most importantly they can take part in lectures held by tea scholars for free.

INTERVIEW

Yang Li, a college classmate, has worked in the teahouse since she graduated. Two years working there have changed her spiritual temperament. She has met many cultured literati and the core tea ceremony has affected her deeply. I shared two problems with her that I had encountered at Hangzhou. One was the ecological and health-related contradictions between the uses of pesticide and the tea picking time; another, the aesthetic contradiction between traditional and commercial packaging. She admitted that the proprietors are deeply aware of the second problem and take it seriously: "What we can do is encourage more people to choose a healthier life, which is the goal of the teahouse." The problem of pesticide use at picking time is generated by consumer demand. She gave an example: "In some grocers, to increase the attractiveness of apples and other fruit, industrial wax is daubed on the surface. But why has this happened? It is because customers consider the surface first without thinking that a superficial appearance is no indicator of deeper value and might indeed prove harmful."



These words inspired me. Why is the tea market becoming more commercial and chaotic? Part of the reason lies with weak, poor or uninspired management. Most important however is consumer pressure, the customers that blindly pursue a perceived – and superficial – idea ignoring the essence and complexity of tea. So it may be important to encourage customers to choose to buy their tea in spring or autumn not summer. Picking time and the nutritional value gained are keys to the benefits of tea: in terms of the packaging, natural or simple is more praiseworthy than extravagance and more in keeping with the philosophy behind the Chinese use of tea.

RESPECTING THE LIFE IN TEA

The shop owner said: "Washing a cup is just like learning my soul after finishing a day's work, and I will forget all my worries."

CULTIVATE



The owner of the Tianyiju teahouse is a scholar and tea specialist. He has introduced some of his own research to deepen understanding of the tea ceremony. "The central concept is respect for the life of the tea leaf itself: the leaf undergoes a long and complex process, a journey from the tree, through picking, then processing – firing, air-curing, sun-drying, rotating, rolling, further drying, fermentation then finally washing in hot water – to express the fullness of its complexity in the tea people drink." It could be said that tea has three stages of life: growing in nature, processing by human hand and finally its spirit reanimated by hot water when drunk. What is clear from his insight is that we need to regard tea not merely as product to be carelessly consumed but as animate. This means respecting its spirit when we drink it and by extension to learn respect for others and for the natural world.





The Chinese tea ceremony

- Harmony – the core of the Chinese philosophy behind the tea ceremony, it involves reconnection with the life-essence of the leaf.
- The chance for quiet moment of self awareness.
- A joyful and relaxing mind and body experience.

When making tea, we need to do so in relaxing conditions with restrained gestures and attention to detail. A relaxed approach can come to delight tea drinkers. Keeping a relaxed attitude concentrates the mind on the making of the tea and through that on the full history and meaning of the leaf that allows the tea. Mundane troubles and considerations can be put in perspective. Thus, a pot of tea expresses the full potential of the leaf that generates it – more than a distraction but rather a combination of excellent flavour, balanced aesthetics and health-giving nutrition. Using psychological discourse the teahouse owner called the tea making process something that acts like a “treatment to distract attention” reducing anxiety through the ritual of making tea during the working day.

For example, when a tea-maker serves tea to their guests, the tea should only fill 70% of the cup: a meaning from this might be that the tea is already too rich and valuable to be carelessly filled to the brim. An intrinsic meaning might also be that we should value humility – something out of step with the consumerism that demands appearance over essence in packaging.

When we taste tea, we need to let it stay a while in the mouth to allow the aroma to develop, to let the tongue taste in combination with that aroma. This suggests that good things need time for enjoyment and the aim should not be to swallow but rather to savour and think and understand.

This is the significance of the Chinese tea ceremony – a significance brought back carefully by the Tianyiju teahouse – that enjoying tea can be a window to generate a theory of life.

Management Strategy

Customers not only have the chance to rest but also to cultivate themselves much as the tea itself has been cultivated. The aim behind the Tianyiju teahouse is not profit but education. Customers should come away with a deeper knowledge of tea and its culture, encouraging them to choose a healthier life by becoming part of that culture. Considering the needs of customers – and by this is meant not a superficial commercial exchange – might build a new kind of brand loyalty based on self-awareness, an alternative to the market-driven motives at work elsewhere.

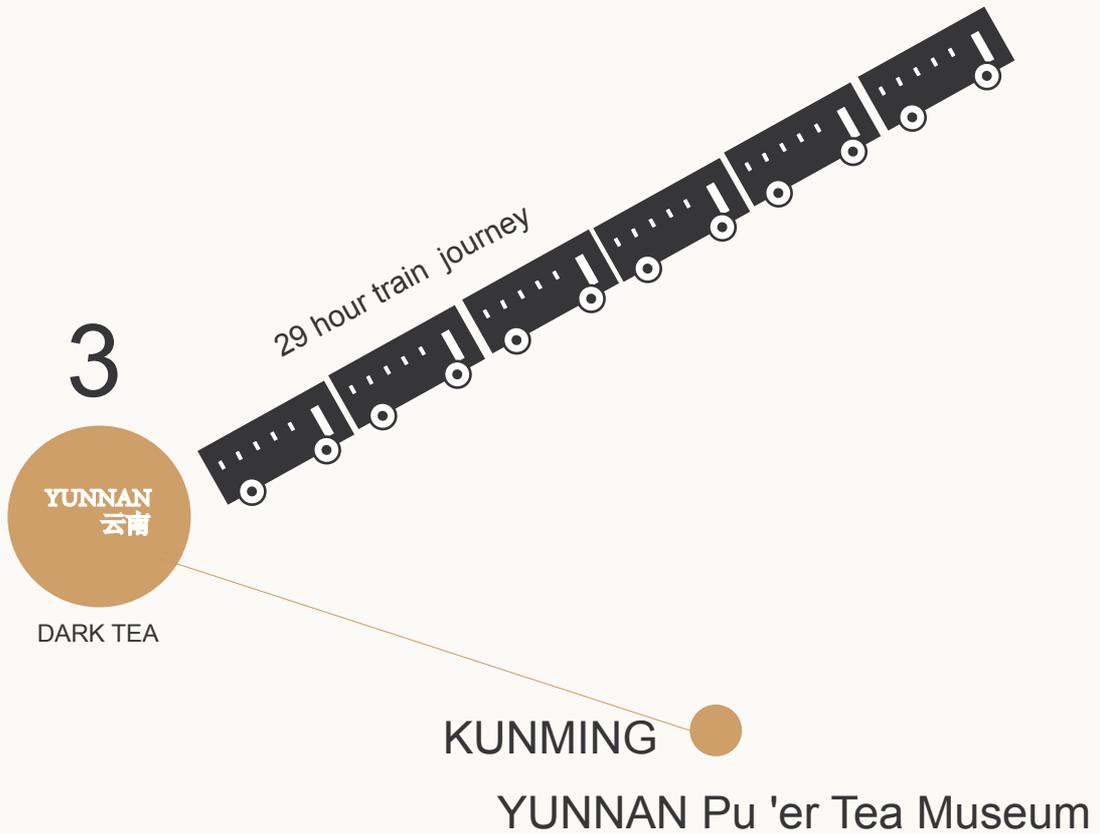


What did I learn here?

CO-DESIGNING



Changing people's commercial behaviour – where consumption is periphery to understanding – is fundamental if we want to generate a genuine alternative to chaotic and selfish consumer culture. Such a culture demands pesticide because it cannot imagine beyond superficial appearance and that pesticide is poisonous.



Yunnan may be is one the earliest places – if not the earliest – where the tea tree was cultivated. In the China Tea Museum they mention that, until today, there are some ancient tea trees to be found in Yunnan province. The oldest living tea tree has been dated to around 3,000 years – two hundred years before the foundation of Rome or one thousand years before the birth of Christ. To identify the origin of tea trees – where they came from and how their cultivation began – I set out on this journey of discovery.



Ancient Tea Horse Route and Pu'er tea

Traces of this ancient trading system that connected Yunnan to Tibet, India and Burma still exist in southwest China and the Route was in operation well into the twentieth century. This was one of the most famous ancient caravan trade channels, using horses, donkeys, mules and often men to carry tea and salt, connecting Yunnan with centres of tea consumption (Chen and Watters, 2010). Its ancient provenance – it started approximately one thousand years ago – and its interconnection of vital trading states and cities make it almost as economically important as another trading system, the Silk Road. This was the silk and jade trading system that connected China through states south of the Himalayas into the Middle East for nearly two thousand years. The tea route is also known as the Ancient Tea Horse Road (茶馬古道) (Fuchs, 2008).

ANCIENT TEA HORSE ROAD



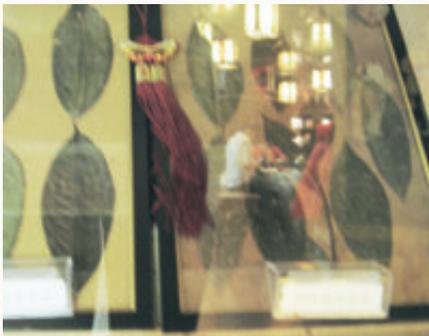
In 1997, Chen Baoya, professor of archaeology at Beijing University, and Mu Jihong, professor of archaeology at Yunnan University, organised a field visit to southwest China and published *Research into the Significance of the Ancient Tea Route*. Their research shows conclusively that Chinese merchants distributed tea across the Sinosphere as far west as modern Persia and the Middle East – an economic system that was extensive, complex and in many ways very modern (Fuchs, 2008).

Pu'er tea is dark tea and can be stored longer, has a higher price and enjoys an extensive cultural and economic history. Over the thousand years of the Tea Route Pu'er tea added significant economic and cultural value to China and its trading partners, the still extant network of tracks now a monument, listed as part of China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Yunnan Pu'er Tea Museum

The Yunnan Pu'er Tea Museum is part of the Yunnan Provincial Museum and promotes China's Intangible Cultural Heritage, specifically its Pu'er tea culture. This provincial museum attracts both those interested in culture and tea connoisseurs seeking to understand better the history of Pu'er tea.





Tea herbarium in the showcase



Bookmark in curator's book

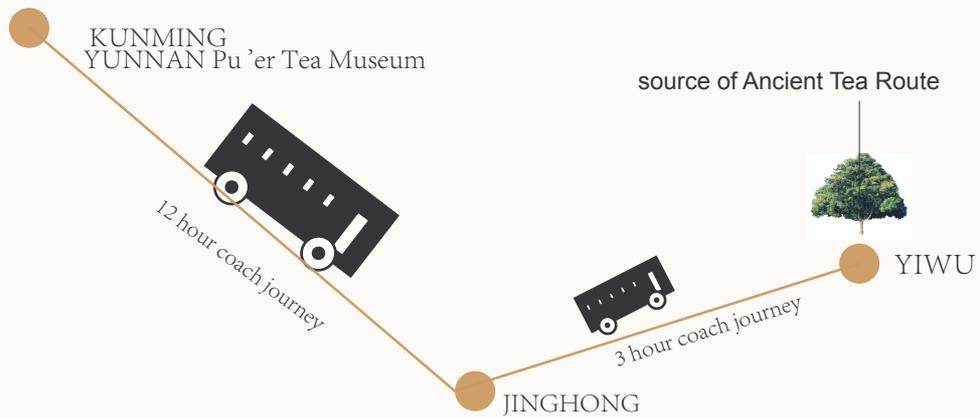
This tealeaf bookmark contains the strong and distinctive natural aroma that invokes its thousand-year story. The cost is negligible but the leaf signifies a great deal and remains the simple tea leaf behind this story – the leaf is a meaningful and memorable souvenir for visitors – much like the tea seed I mention later – symbolic and real at the same time..

Ethos



Certain writers have worked hard to promote Pu'er tea. Zeng Linyun, curator of the Tea Museum, is one. She has conducted extensive research and her work supported the health-giving effects of tea drinking during the Beijing Olympic Games of 2008 and the Shanghai World Expo of 2010. She was given funding from the central government to develop tourism at the source of the Tea Route – Yinwu village in Xishuangbanna. Sadly this funding was embezzled by local government officials and now she spends her time promoting the culture of tea at the Museum. She feels delighted that young people and students are interested in the culture of tea and she even helped arrange my onward journey to Yiwu, the village that was a key link in the ancient Tea Route.

On the way from Jinghong to Yiwu, the landscape looks unexceptionable: sadly it is unusual to see much original natural countryside.



YIWU VILLAGE



Yiwu is an ancient village located in Xishuangbanna inhabited by the Dai. The Dai people are indigenous to one of the autonomous regions of China bordering Laos, a region known as the “Golden Triangle”. The average elevation is greater than 1,500 metres with a tropical climate offering abundant sunshine and rainfall – the topographical conditions are excellent for growing tea. The ruggedness of the plateau limits agricultural activity and for exactly this reason the wild ancient tea trees have been well protected.

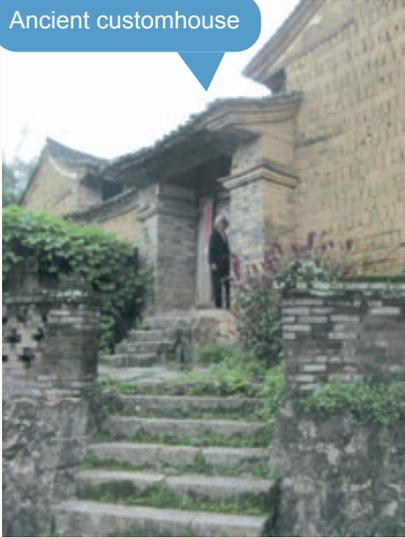
Small local tea museum



Tea Mountain God



Ancient customhouse

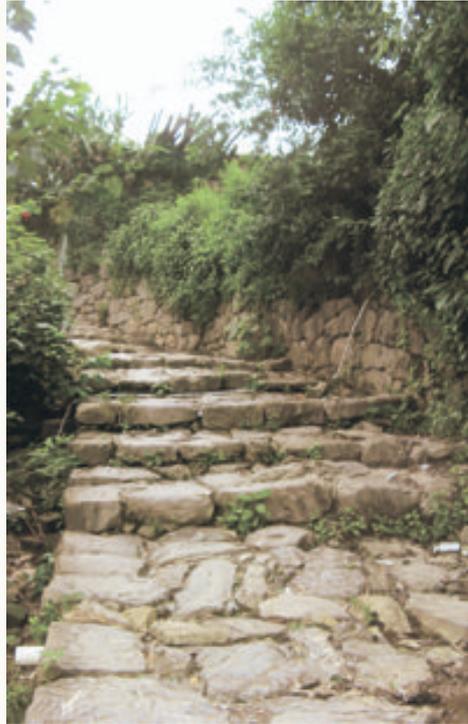


Village landscape



Yiwu – a royal tribute village during the Qing Dynasty and one of the ancient sources of the Tea Route – became a backwater and for a while fell into total obscurity. Some historical relics were not well protected: for example, the rural flagstones forming the ancient Tea Route, ideal for the caravans, have been smothered by a modern asphalt road. This may be due, in large measure, to a deficit of sustainable developmental ideas among those who plan infrastructure.

Part of the Ancient Tea Horse Route which still exists



Part of ancient road now covered by modern asphalt



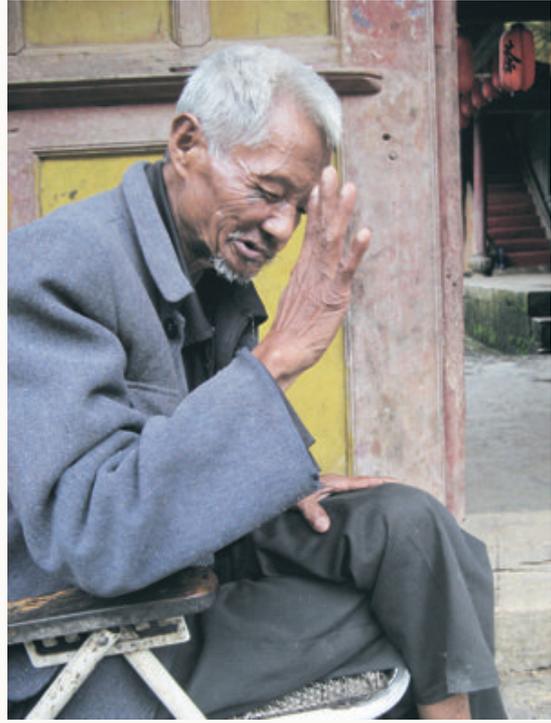
INTERVIEW

The lack of joined-up planning extends to a small local tea museum in Yiwu which, surprisingly, does not open to the public. On the second day I was lucky that my visit coincided with that of a group of television journalists who were making a documentary. The caretaker introduced a signboard which is now among the most important artefacts in Yiwu. He said “a group of scholars and professors came here to observe and to study and they found this signboard in a farmer’s home. The calligraphy was written by the Emperor Guangxu of the Qing Dynasty but, of course, the farmer had no idea. Since that discovery Yiwu began to be noticed again.”

Cheng Shun Hao, one of the eight ancient teastalls in this village, is the home of the farmer where the royal signboard was discovered.



INTERVIEW



HIS MEMORY OF THE ANCIENT TEA ROUTE AND PU'ER TEA



One of Yiwu's oldest residents had inherited and run his family tea stall but was now retired. He told me that "when I was a small child we always heard from the adults that it was a great and arduous journey from here to the capital. Even Tibet might as well have been a foreign country because the mountain road is so precipitous and dangerous. Even though now this perception has been changed – after all, we do not need caravans to transport the tea any more – nevertheless, the ancient Tea Route should be marked, it has a kind of spirit that lasts forever." He also told me how people discovered fermentation tea. "During a long journey, the tea was bumped on the horse and accidentally fermented in the bag. It was only later that people discovered that this produced a different flavour and that is how black tea originated."



This courtyard was where the tea traders and caravan porters with their animals gathered before they set out. There is one monument which signposted the several ancient roads but, sadly, it had not been well protected.



Thousand-year-old tea tree

Camellia sinensis



Pu'er tea comes from a variety of tea distinct from the green bush tea tree in Hangzhou, the older Pu'er variety growing to around 20 metres. Some of the oldest tea trees are enclosed by wire netting to protect them – this one is a thousand years old.

Local people told me that the smaller, bush tea tree is the result of selective breeding from this higher tea tree. It is easier to harvest the leaves from the bush but higher trees enjoy better shade. For shorter tea trees strong, direct sunshine within a large expanse of vegetation makes them vulnerable to plant diseases and insect pests. High tea trees growing in a forest do not have this problem and do not need pesticide spraying.

Tea flower and tea seed

The tea flowers, seeds and larger tealeaves cannot be processed to make tea. Nowadays farmers propagate from cuttings instead of using seeds to grow the trees. Some farms still use the ground up seeds to fertilize the soil but most ignore them altogether. It may be possible to use them to make souvenirs like the leaves from the Yunnan Pu'er Tea Museum.





SEED



These seeds were picked accidentally together with tealeaves by farmers who took them home. Later, they were discarded as farmers do not use seeds to grow tea trees any longer.

In this village, manual tea workshops are still the norm in every farmer's home.

1

Sunshine drying after picking



Pan firing

2



A local farmer singled out the second stage of heating as key to success. "The technique of firing is very important and handlers should pay close attention to the duration and degree of heating, the length of time the leaves are cooked and the way the leaves are stirred, even to the gestures used in stirring." After heating, the aroma smells incredible in the sunshine, an intense odour not unlike fresh grass.



Rolling 4



3 Dry

There are seven steps in the processing of the leaf:

1. Sunshine drying after picking
2. Pan firing
3. Air-drying
4. Rotating and drying
5. Fermentation
6. Press
7. Packing



After drying, the farmer picked a leaf up. “Some tea companies buy up the surplus residue, the dust, to make low quality tea bags.” The residual dust used in such bags does not include the real essence of the tealeaf.



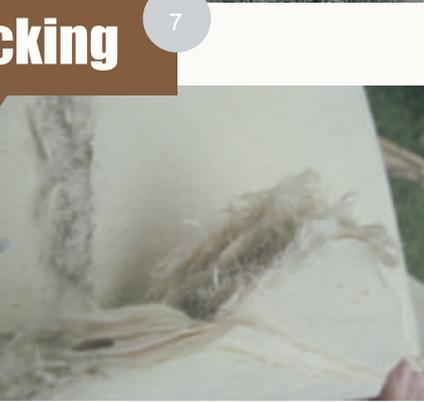
At each stage of the process, attention must be paid to the atmospheric humidity, temperature and the weather. Rain occurring when sun is needed for the drying stage may mean the tealeaf will be prone to mildew and therefore have to be discarded.

5

Fermentation



After the fermentation stage the tealeaves must be moved into the steam room where a stone mill presses the leaves into a cake which is easier to store and transport. The last stage is packaging. Bamboo leaves and cotton paper are used to store the tea cake. This packaging is done by hand which helps keep the original flavours better than with tea that has been machine packed.



7

For packing



Landslides



When I was returning, I saw mountains covered with tea tree plantations, while farmers were reclaiming wasteland to plant more trees. However, plant cover of a single species – a monoculture – may be dangerous and lead to ecological damage such as soil erosion: landslides were noticeably frequent in these areas. This journey had made me think more deeply about the issues that surround the production of tea. While watching farmers strive selflessly to increase yield and maintain standards of production – and seeing how local communities and scholars can work together to describe and pass on the aesthetics and culture of tea – I also hoped it would be possible to strike a balance between development and the environment. If this is not done, China will lose through the degradation of valuable and irreplaceable agricultural land.

Cultural heritage should not be forgotten.



Traditional hands on technique should be protected.



As a tea museum, we should do more.
Not just exhibitions, but also how to bring culture alive in the musuem!

After finishing this rural journey I went back to the Pu'er Tea Museum and talked again with the curator. We both agreed that the Museum should add certain activities such as workshops as well as offering visitors unique souvenirs. She had herself visited wine chateau in France and museums outside China and saw the need to do more in terms of education, publicity and some ways to make the project more self-sustainable. She told me that when the Pu'er Tea Museum is rebuilt and expanded these possibilities will be considered.

CO-DESIGNING

MUSEUM WORKSHOP



When it comes to unique cultural inheritance, every nation needs to think carefully. The people I met on my journey had made and were making great efforts to maintain and deepen China's cultural inheritance, each in their own way.

I took this picture at Yunnan Provincial Museum. A famous artist was teaching children kirigami – the art of paper cutting. This kind of workshop is commonplace in the UK but rare in Chinese museums. I felt excited by the way the Museum was providing a public space for people to teach and to learn. In this way the Museum was extending itself beyond being a space for exhibitions alone. Activities that involve visitors and deepen understanding might make museums more interactive and reactive. In this way, visitors – especially children who are increasingly reliant on complex and challenging audiovisual media such as computer games – can more easily feel they are taking part in their cultural inheritance, owning what is theirs and leaving with a new level of understanding.

BEIJING
北京

4

OFFICE



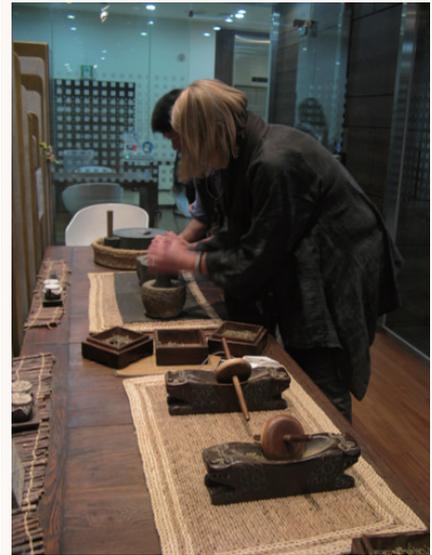
In an office in modern Beijing, every employee has a traditional tea set on their desk. They value the time set aside for the tea ceremony during the working day. My cousin works in this company and thought this tradition added a harmonious atmosphere to his office.

SECONDARY RESEARCH

Ancillary research included in-depth reading about the Chinese tea ceremony - see Appendices B to k (P117-121) and a workshop at the Samsung Art and Design Institute (SADI) that promotes herbal tea culture in South Korea.



Koreans having a tea party at Namshan Park



Teaching how to make herb tea in the Oriental Medicine Museum in Seoul

Teahouse in Sichuan Province in China





2.0 Research analysis

2.1 Analysis journey.....	P77
2.2 Service aim	P82

RESEARCH ANALYSIS





Analysis of the tea journey



Based on the tea journey, I analysed some problems and suggested solutions:



1

The trip to Hangzhou

For tourists visiting Hangzhou, the West Lake and Long Jing village are key attractions. For millennia Hangzhou has been made famous by these two beautiful places, well-known in China and beyond.

Most visitors come in search of Long Jing green tea culture but miss one fascinating and instructive place – the China Tea Museum.

Problems and gaps

2

The Wuhan Tea House

The reason behind the success of this venture is not commercial: the owners communicate with enormous enthusiasm their understanding of tea and its place in Chinese culture. Their enthusiasm is infectious and customers quickly become willing students of tea culture, growing to understand and accept the values they learn – often for the first time – buying tea not as a superficial expression of tourist fashions but as the culmination to their own personal journeys of exploration. If those working for the Chinese tea industry want to change their customers' behaviour, it is essential first to deepen knowledge, to create values that enhance the experience of tea.

The central concept of the Chinese tea ceremony – which is a poor translation of 茶藝 which means the art of tea – is to respect the key ingredient, the leaf, through the entire process of brewing and serving tea.

3

The experience of Yunnan's dark tea

For tourists, the Pu'er Tea Museum is more accessible than the tea estates themselves. It is part of the Yunnan Provincial Museum which is located in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province. The Tea Museum is famous for the way it manages to capture and communicate the mystery and the power of ancient Chinese culture, a heritage about which most Chinese are justly proud. The Pu'er Tea Museum concerns itself with communicating not tangible artefacts but, rather, an intangible and complex cultural heritage and it is the first place tourists tend to visit in Yunnan province. The problem for tourists is that the tea estates are too far away from Kunming and there are so many that an itinerary is difficult to generate without help – tourists do not know how to start their journey of discovery and there is little to guide tea enthusiasts apart from the Museum.

4

The visit to Yi'wu village

As a royal tributary tea village this was one of the starting points of the Ancient Tea Route. Sadly, it has not been well protected over the years and much of the physical heritage has been eroded or lost.

5

Shared problem of the China Tea Museum in Honchu and the Pu'er Tea Museum in Yunnan: weak pre-service and post-service

According to the curator of the Pu'er Tea Museum in Yunnan – which is in many ways similar in its approach to other Chinese museums – there is abundant funding from central and state sources because, nowadays, the government is trying its best to promote traditional Chinese culture. In terms of long-term development funding is no replacement for a nuanced approach to museum services and Chinese museums need to improve their introductory and follow-up services to attract more visitors, provide better service for those visitors and, of course, to encourage those visitors to return.

Service concept

Based on problems **1** and **5**

The aim of my service delivery:

Choosing the China Tea Museum as a platform to promote Chinese tea culture for tea tourists to Hangzhou.

Discover

Define

Develop

Deliver

Problem 1

People do not know here!



China National Tea Museum

But they all know here!

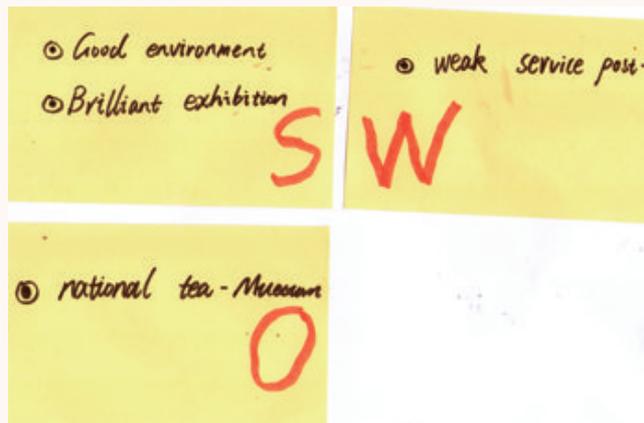


LongJing village



Key Tourist attractions for green tea

SWOT of the museum



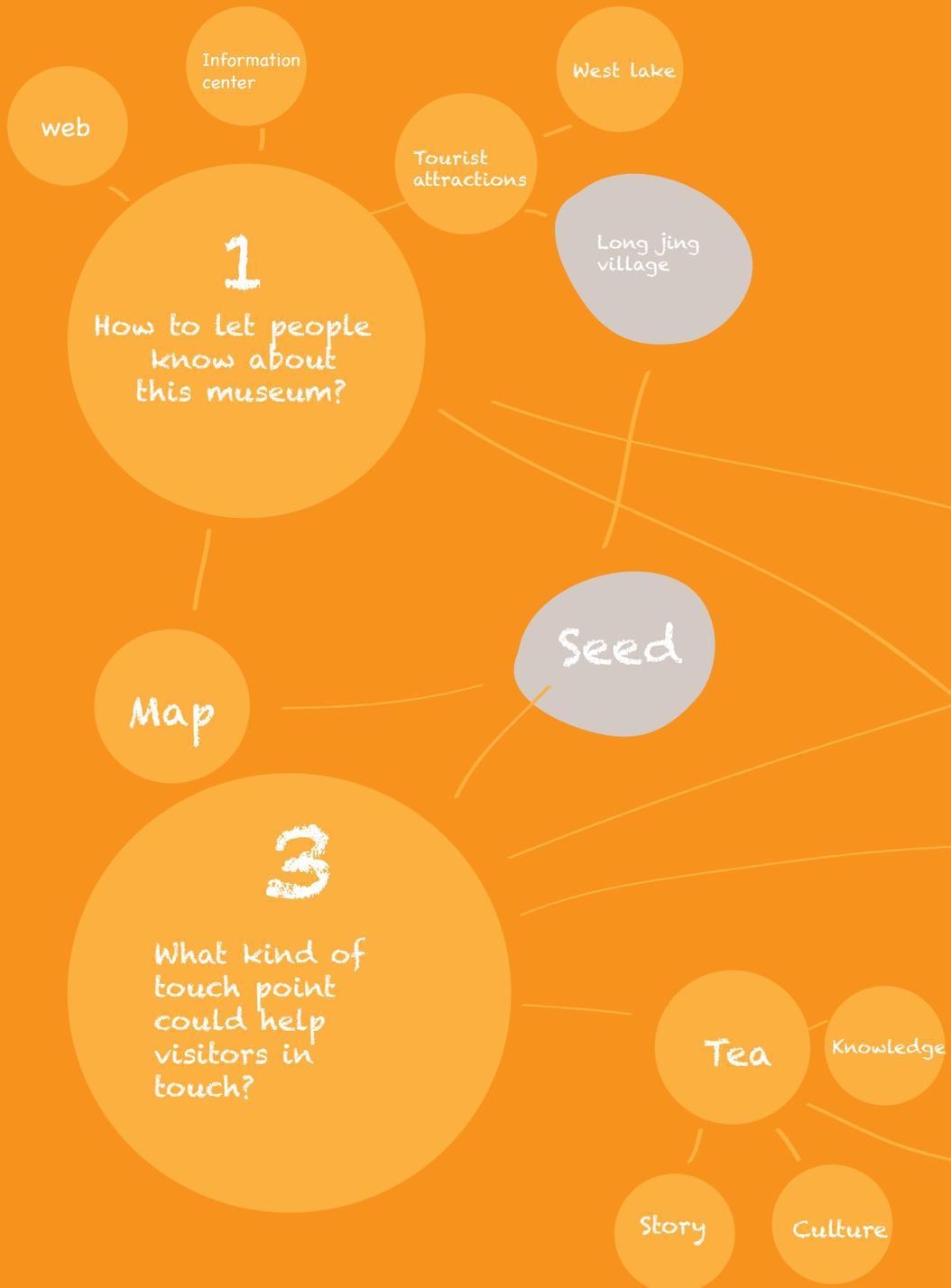
High service:

Good environment surrounded by mountains
Systematic introduction for tea knowledge
Interactive technology to help visitors understand.

Low service:

Pre-service is not enough which people rarely know
Post-service is not enough, people buy teacup, tealeaf and leave
Museum hasn't built a long relationship with tourists.

BrainStormMap







3.0 Design process

3.1 Prototyping.....	P89
3.2 Service concept.....	P115
3.3 Storyboard.....	P117
3.4 Blueprint.....	P119

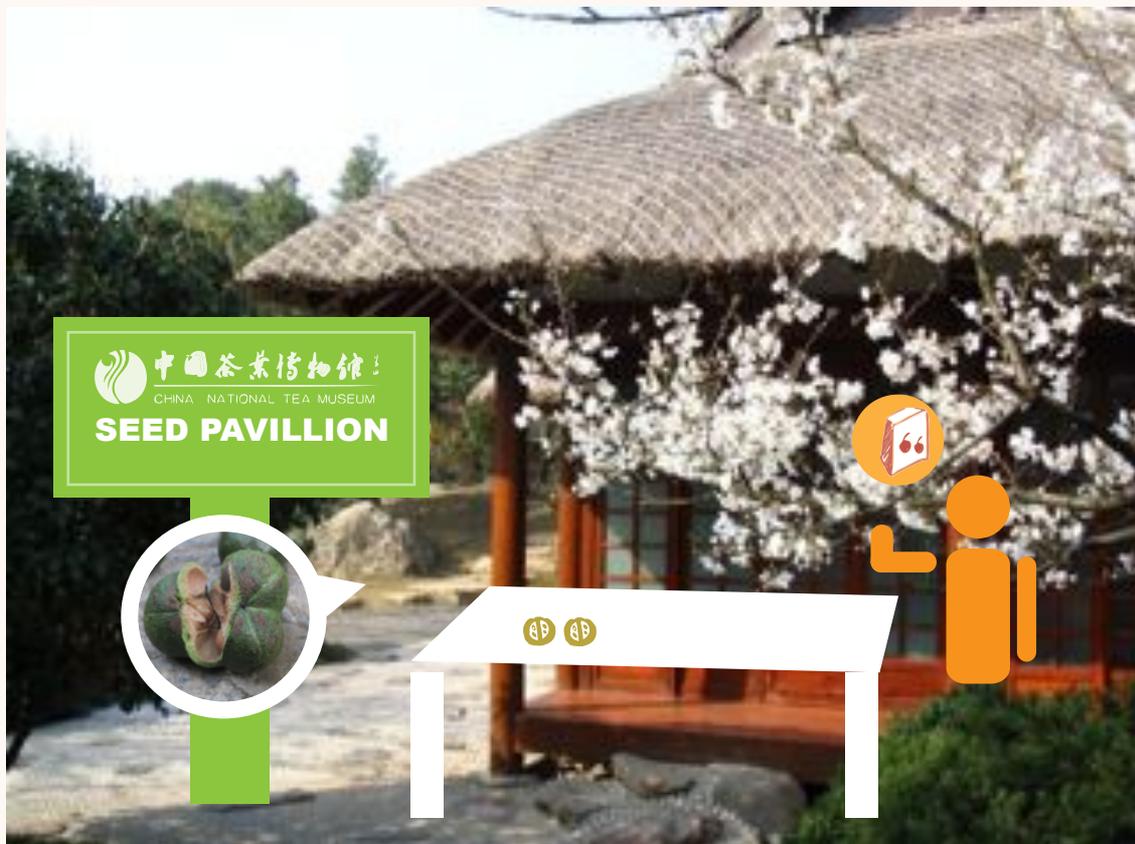


Is it possible to attract tourists to the China Tea Museum?

First of all, it is important to find the ideal way to publicise the Museum and let potential visitors know why this is an excellent place to learn about the culture of tea. With the exception of usual communication channels such as the Internet, TV, advertisements, brochures and signage, what else can be done to generate pre-service? What is the most direct and effective and cost-effective method?

PROTOTYPING 1

Perhaps one solution could be the construction of a seed pavilion at tourist attraction of Long Jing village, a place that tea lovers must visit. This could be combined with packaging a tea seed with a map which exactly locates the museum and either sending or giving this to tourists interested in tea and local culture. The advantage is that it would be easy to target a receptive group while cheaply reusing the tea seed that otherwise would simply be thrown away. The tea seed might not only be used for attracting tourists to the Museum, it could also furnish visitors with a suitable souvenir – reminding them of organic and sustainable life if they take the tea seed home to plant.



SEED PAVILLION

Prototyping 1.1



Can museum visiting be more fun?

The museum provides a good service in terms of its permanent exhibitions. Visitors plainly enjoy their experience, enhanced by the excellent environment and unique courtyard layout. What else might make their visit both more enjoyable and more educational?

After visitors have visited the Museum and drunk the tea, they could take part in workshops, learn how to fire the tea leaves, how to recycle them after drinking, how to use their unique and beautiful shape in handicrafts. Visitors could learn from taking part in activities, feeling successfully creative when they have, for example, created a souvenir to send to friends using natural constituents derived from the tea tree.



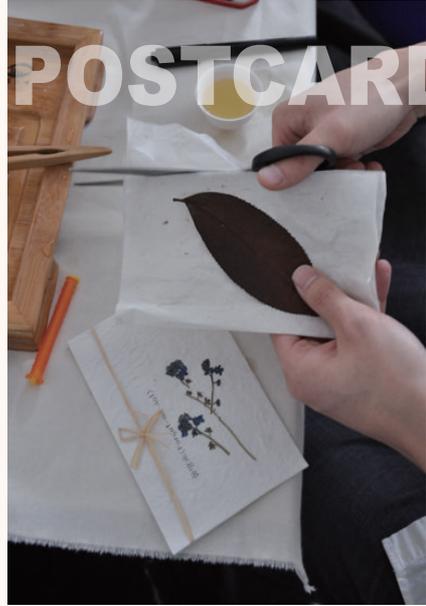
Develop

PROTOTYPING 2

WORKSHOP

RECYCLE TEALEAF

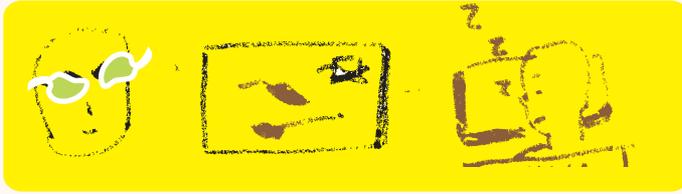




Prototyping 2.0

In such a workshop, visitors could also deepen their knowledge of a wide spectrum of beneficial ethnobotany. For example, the benefits that tea leaves can give when made into a pillow, tea baths that help circulation and have a disinfectant property, tea cotton pads for removing dark circles under the eyes. This range of knowledge was available on the information board in the exhibition room and in a leaflet – but these are passive methods of education and might not engage many people. Using workshops might affect visitors' behaviour more deeply, connecting ideas with physical objects. Things of value can be learnt and shared adding to the significance of the Museum's space and increasing its reach.





Is it possible – using only what is to hand locally – to create a unique souvenir which the visitor could keep as a souvenir? Is it also possible that that souvenir might act to maintain communication between the visitor and the Museum once the visit is over?



The current leaflet which visitors can take away, but could this be combined with the tea product?

Currently, after visiting the Museum, visitors can buy in the shop tea products or a book that outlines the history of the tea ceremony. However, these products can be bought elsewhere and there is nothing to distinguish the origin of such products and thus enhance a visit by provenance. It might be better if visitors could take away leaflets specific to the aspects of tea culture they find most interesting – perhaps leaflets linked to an audio or audio-visual experience – then it is more likely that such literature will add value to the visit and that it will later be shared with others. Importantly, such information would be of value because it is linked to the Museum experience. The tea product, its cultivation and culture, could have added value through this kind of integrated but nuanced information?



I did some prototyping (see below, pages 97 – 113) based on this idea. I wanted to ascertain which souvenir was most interesting and suitable for visitors.



Which factors are important for tea packaging



An investigation into tea packaging

Ideally, packaging should contain certain key information. For instance, the product name, the net content, the name and address of the supplier, the place of origin, the date of packaging, the grade of quality and – in China – the Quality and Safety (QS) number that acts as a guarantee, a little like the French use of “appellation contrôlée”. This basic information should always be included on the packaging but some packages have none while passing themselves off as the best tea from the best area. Such packagers may play with symbols from Chinese tea culture to enhance – falsely – their perceived quality.

Different places and times give tea different qualities, tastes and therefore prices. Even from the same village, different tea estates do not produce the same quality. The season of origin is also important for judging tea yet such information is hardly if ever found on packaging.



Chinese tea



Taiwanese tea

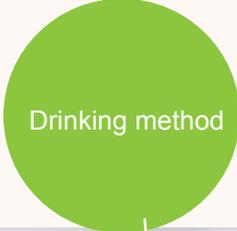
Importantly, customers rarely get the truth about the tea they are buying, nor would they understand what are the best times and places in terms of provenance. What is needed is not only basic information on packaging but also a stress on features like tea variety, details of the estate location and the picking time. Since the tea drinker not only notices the brand they trust but also might like a change such information could enhance customer choice.



Korean tea

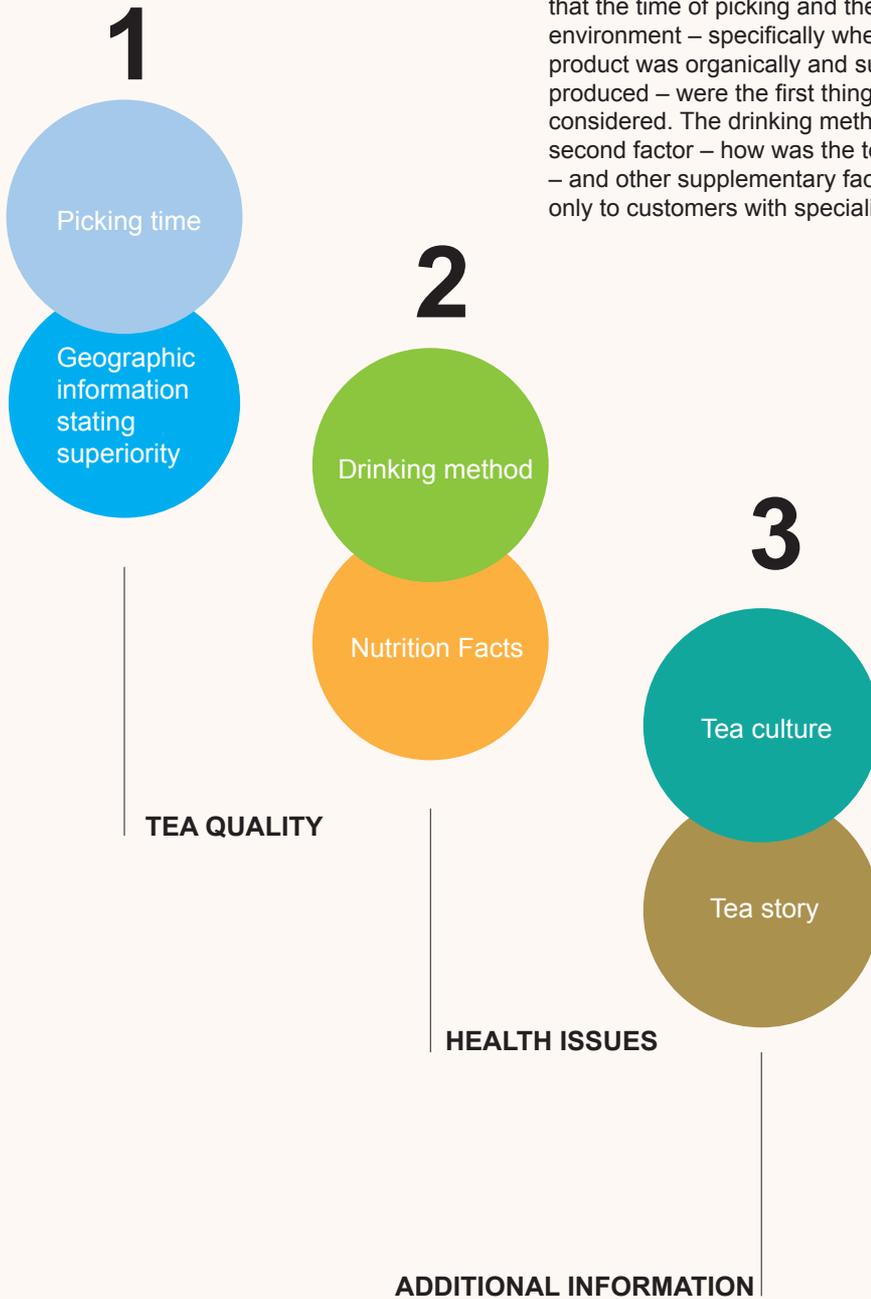


British tea



Japanese tea

Based on this comparison and interviews conducted during my tea odyssey, I found that the time of picking and the geographical environment – specifically whether the product was organically and sustainably produced – were the first things customers considered. The drinking method was the second factor – how was the tea to be made – and other supplementary factors applied only to customers with specialist interests.





LOST
Tealeaf information

picking time

geographic environment

ADDITION

manufacturing process

drinking method

Rough Prototyping 3.1

On this prototype package, the picking time is printed clearly on the front of the bag, and the geographic environment is presented on the back. This includes details such as soil quality and climate. The aim of this prototype is to address the interview data that stressed the importance of picking time and environment.

PICKING TIME



GEOGRAPHIC ENVIRONMENT





Traditional tea story for culture lovers

Rough Prototyping3.2

Using the traditional packaging method to pack the tea (inspired by the Korean journey to the Oriental Medicine Museum in Seoul) means a tourist could take away product in packaging which adds value. Because different visitors will have different interests, so there could be different stories contained inside the packaging – for example, healthy drinking methods and nutritional information for tea lovers, the traditional tea story and details of the tea ceremony for those more scholastically inclined, a green tea journey game for children. At the back of the package, visitors can scan the QR matrix barcode using their phone to gain more information about the source area and Museum. The disadvantage is that packaging may be fragile and hard to keep intact. Once the integrity of the package is lost so is much of the valuable information.



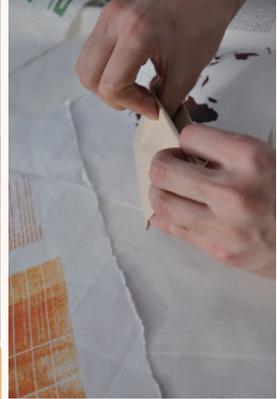
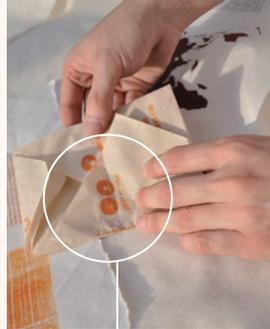


80°C WATER



ONE HOUR AROUND MEAL

Drinking notice



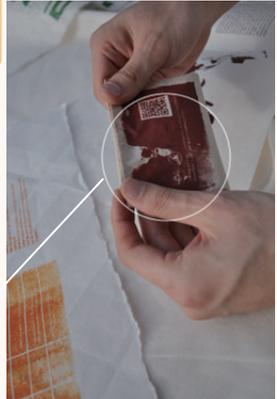
Suitable drinking season:



It contains information about how to administer the contents as well as the suitable period for drinking.



QR Code can be scanned





The green tea journey game for children, containing the information about green tea, its manufacture culture.



Rough Prototyping3.3

Based on the disadvantage of prototype 2.2, paper may be too thin and fragile and so I changed paper into card. It might be that printing a label such as “tea lover” would be too direct – the message could even be misconstrued – and therefore would put a visitor off.



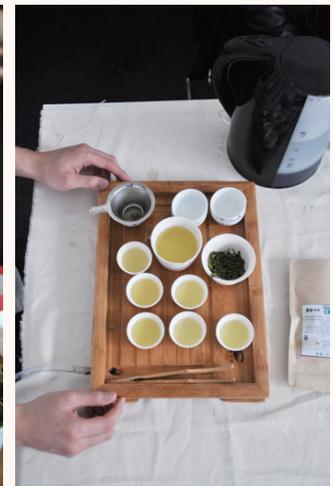
Rough Prototyping3.4

“Respect the life of the tealeaf ” is based on the key idea of the Chinese tea ceremony – an idea I heard expressed by the tea expert in Wuhan. The aim of this prototype is to encourage people to move beyond seeing tea merely as refreshment and to respect the leaf itself. Just like the story printed on the tea towel, this prototype explains the entire life of the tealeaf and may therefore encourage visitors to cherish the contents and recycle them after drinking the tea. Putting the tea cup together with the tea towel into the tea basket forms a simple picnic set, to be enjoyed anywhere.



Testing

Testing involves inviting a group of people, serving tea for them, then asking their reactions to prototyping and getting some feedback (see feedback for each prototyping).



PROTOTYPING 3

Tea basket



On the basis of testing all the prototypes and listening to suggestions from my peers, I made the final prototype. Compared with the previous prototype, the tea basket with the story inside is more attractive and easier to take away for visitors to the Museum.



After visiting the exhibition, people can choose different stories, putting them into a tea basket and sending this to an appropriate recipient. This targeting may be effective because carried out by the visitor. For example, the ancient tea journey story for those interested in history, tea drinking methods for tea lovers and the green tea game for children. In this way, visitors share whatever knowledge they gained at the Museum with family and friends and let more people to know about both tea culture and the Museum itself.



Cushion



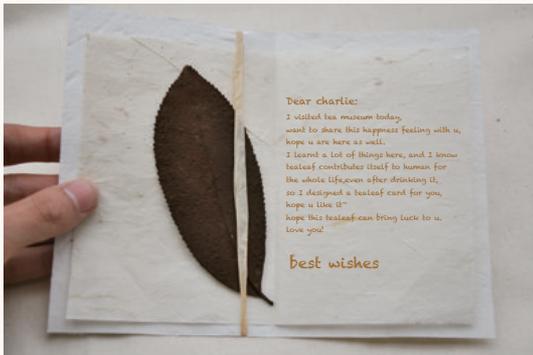
Under the basket there is a cushion to prevent the tea from breaking. On this cushion is printed the name of the tea product and information about the Museum. There is a link, a downloadable app for the Tea Museum website, so that anyone using the cushion can explore its origin.



Museum web address and app

PROTOTYPING 4

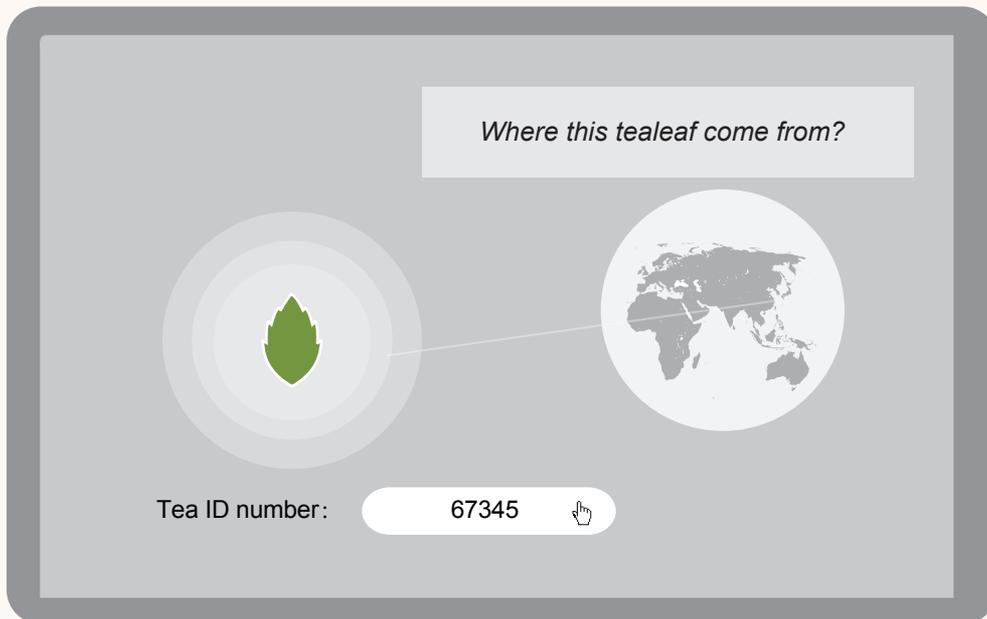
Tealeaf postcard



There were no postcards available at the Tea Museum but these, acting as a cultural symbol as well as a souvenir for visitors, could be important. Instead of standard postcards visitors could personalise one using a tealeaf at the workshop and send it to their friends, deepening their experience of the Museum.



After a friend received the postcard they could smell the tea leaf and gain the strong and distinctive natural aroma that invokes its thousand-year story. There would be a tea leaf code number on the back of the card. If they wanted to know more they could log into the museum website, type in the tealeaf code number, and find out exactly the provenance of that leaf.





They could also gain more information about the tea producing area by clicking on specific pictures. If this arouses their interest – as the pictures are designed to do – they might visit the museum and the region in turn. In this way, more people can be brought to a better, more individual and active knowledge of tea culture by the China Tea Museum.



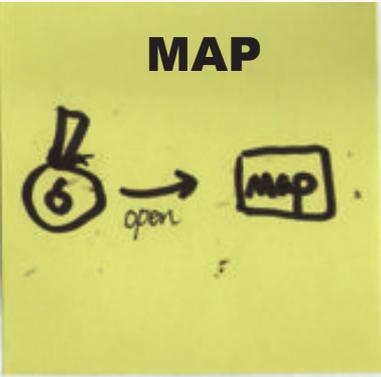


SERVICE CONCEPT

PRE-SERVICE



Bulid a seed pavilion in Longjing villiage - famous tourist attraction in Hangzhou

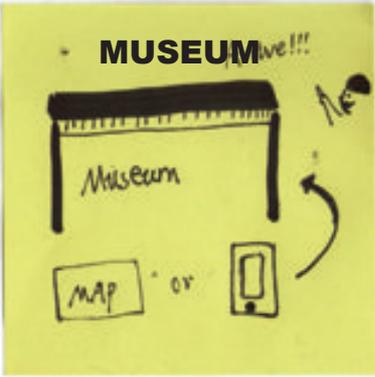


Register membership and get tea seed and map



Download App, get discount coupon

SERVICE PERIOD



Arriving at the museum following by map



Visit exhibition



Free tea tasting after the visit

SERVICE PERIOD



Take part in "recycle tealeaf workshop"



During workshop, make a tealeaf card send to friends



Buy tea basket and finish journey

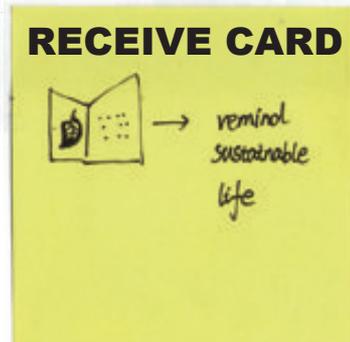
POST SERVICE



Open each one, it tells a different story



Friends recive tealeaf card , then downlond app know more



STORY BOARD



Mr wang
Age:45
Tea visitor in
Long Jing Village



DOWNLOAD APP

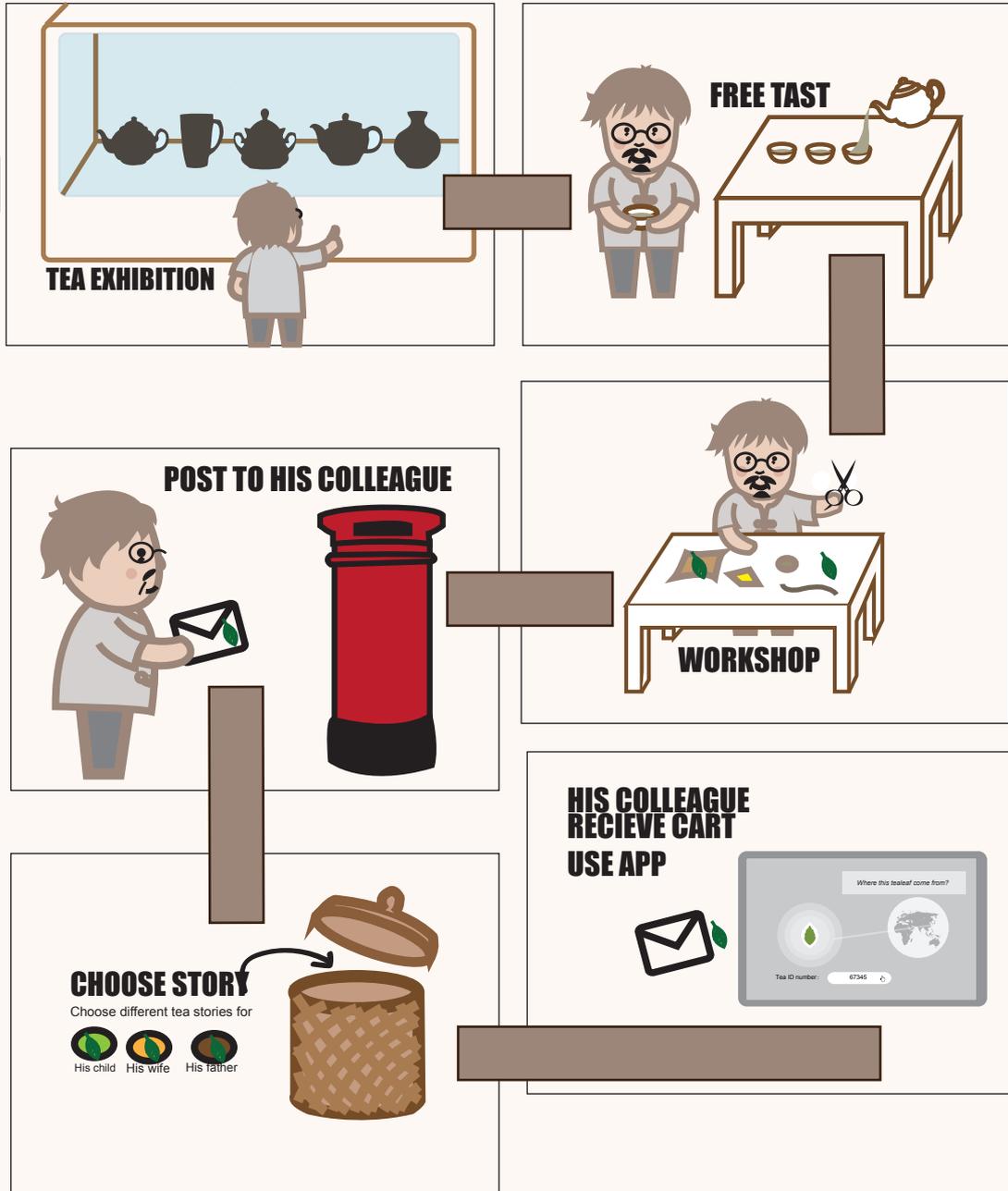
SEARCH LOCATION



Seed

MAP

Longjing Village



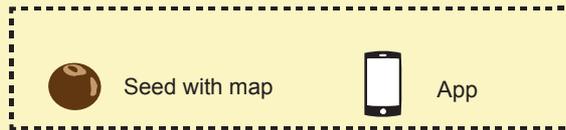
BLUEPRINT

PRE-SERVICE

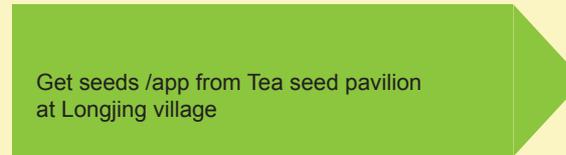
||||| Place



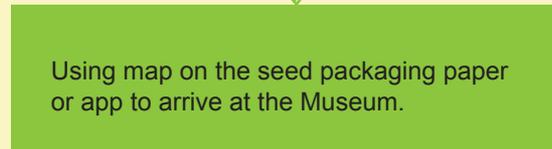
||||| Touch point



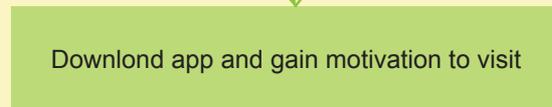
||||| Tourist action



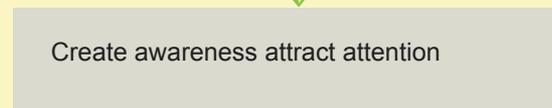
||||| Front stage



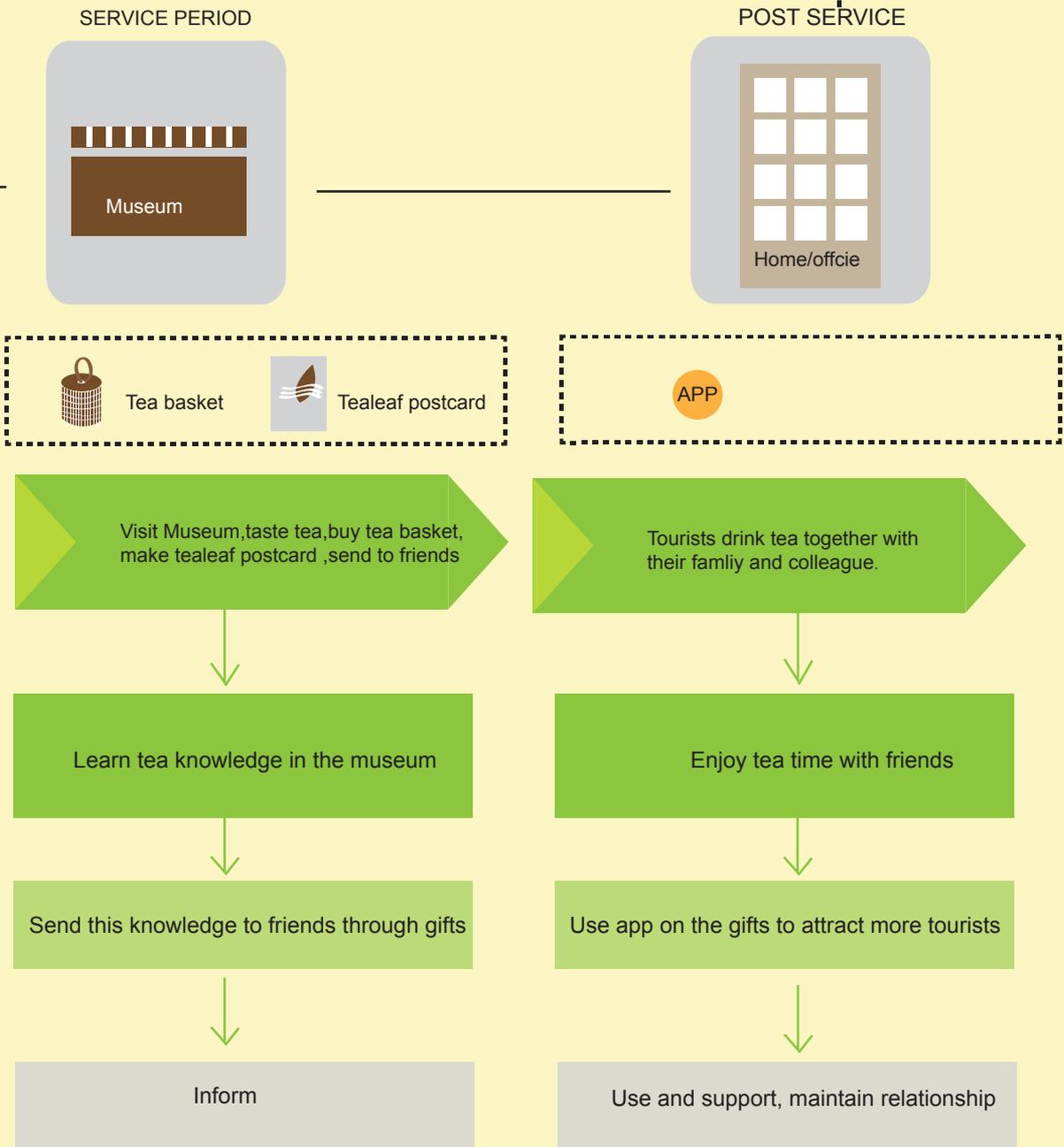
||||| Backstage



||||| Backstage



Tourists who did not go to the Museum, could get the seed and download the app and get in touch





4.0 CONCLUSION

Throughout this project, beginning in June and ending in November, 2012, I have benefitted enormously from a long and intense journey. I have deepened my research abilities, sharpened my design concepts and simultaneously been able to gain a fascinating insight into Chinese tea culture.

As I put together the project proposal I understood how people – those who will use what I design – should come first. Analysing people's behaviour has taught me that it is necessary to consider this respectfully and carefully before starting any design. Such responsive observation helped me understand what problems I would face and know what kind of data I should seek before beginning the research. During my tea journey detailed information was achieved through interviews, observation and surveys. However, as I listened and observed and widened my understanding I also learnt the value of co-designing – communicating effectively and sensitively with the target is an important skill I learnt from those with whom I spoke and to whom I listened. During concept development –after having defined it precisely – a designer should have the ability to synthesise ideas and focus clearly on those problems that may weaken their ability to communicate. At the final stage of the service delivery after a significant, reflective process of rough prototyping, the output should be connected with the target – informed by them and needed by them – and a key consideration is to deliver the touch point successfully through the users, not merely to design attractive surfaces. At this stage, I have learned that it is not the final product that is most important, but, rather, the process behind it.

During my journey, I learnt a great deal about the Chinese tea ceremony and, in this sense, my project became a journey of self-cultivation. I met scholars who selflessly had made great efforts to sustain and pass on traditional culture. I admired and was moved by their work which spoke volumes to me as a designer. To be a designer responsibly – not only a service designer – means to recognise the duty to use design to improve society and allow people to become the authors of their own understanding and behaviour. In this way, I have always believed it is the responsibility of designers to do more than pass messages, however cleverly that may be done. Having met the scholars in China and listened to their analyses of the culture and art of tea – so profound yet also so respectful of others – made me compare myself with them. Their perceptions and almost spiritual detachment has allowed me to reassess my definition of design and thus of my own choice of design as a career. Most crucially, therefore, I have learnt to see the world from different and often strange points of view and then to take what I have seen and use it generatively. Design is no longer merely a career following a course – it is a conversation that is fascinatingly unpredictable and which has now an exciting trajectory.