

REPORT OF SURVEY ON TSHERINGMA HERBAL TEA

Kinga Jamphel, Head, Pharmaceutical and Research Unit

Introduction

Tsheringma Herbal Tea has been in the domestic market for a couple of years by now. Bhutanese officials and travelers have been carrying it as gift item to many countries around the world and the tea is carried back home by many tourists who visit Bhutan.

The money generated through sales of this tea is deposited in the Revolving Fund which is used for the purchase of the medicinal raw materials. Therefore the successful retailing of the herbal tea is in a way important for the delivery of traditional medical services. In order to look at ways of increasing the demand and sales, it is important that some market surveys and audits are carried out from time to time. Although few consumer studies had been carried out over the recent years in few north-western towns in the country, no studies had ever been carried out in the southern towns. The southern towns were not been given focus considering that there is a small market potential. However, due to the socio-economic development and changes in the life-style of the people, it was felt that there could be a change in the food habits as well.

A small survey was conducted in the towns of Damphu, Sarpang and Gaylephu in 2005 to understand the customers' perception of the Tsheringma herbal tea as well as to get an overview of the market potential in the southern towns.

This paper presents the findings of the above survey and gives recommendations for future activities with regard to marketing and product development.

Materials and Methods

The survey was carried out by visiting the selected Hotels and Shops in the survey areas i.e. the towns of Damphu, Sarpang and Gelephu. The proprietors and managers of Hotels, Shops and Restaurants, and potential customers were selected randomly and interviewed using semi-structured questionnaire. The interviewees were briefed on the purpose of the survey and the implications after which consent was sought for voluntary participation in the survey. Observations were made and information gathered on the types of tea available and their costs. The survey participants were served Tsheringma tea and their opinions/perceptions on the taste, flavour and cost of the tea collected and documented.



Fig. 1 Survey participants tasting herbal tea and giving feedback

Results and Discussions

A total of 56 people (31 males and 25 females) between the age group of 17 – 75 years were interviewed (Table 1 and Table 2).

Table 1: Total people interviewed in each towns

People	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu
Male (total)	8	9	14
Businessmen	3	6	12
Student	0	0	2
Farmer	3	3	1

Civil servant	2	0	0
Female (total)	8	3	14
Businessmen	5	3	11
Student	0	0	1
Farmer	2	0	1
Civil servant	1	0	1
Total	16	12	28

Table 2: Age group of people interviewed

Age group	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu
17-25 yrs	6	2	6
25-50 yrs	7	7	19
50-70 yrs	2	3	3
>70 yrs	1	0	0

The survey found that majority of people interviewed (60.7%) never heard about Tsheringma tea before the survey (Table 3).

Table 3: People in each town who had heard and not heard of Tsheringma Herbal Tea

People	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu	% (total)
Not heard	11	10	13	60.7
Heard	5 (3M, 2 F)	2 (2 M)	15 (6 M, 9 F)	39.3

When the interviewees were asked as to who and where the Tsheringma Herbal tea was manufactured, only 5.4% knew where and who manufactured the tea (Table 4).

Table 4: People who knew where and who manufactured the Tsheringma Herbal Tea

People	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu	% (total)
Who knew	0	1 (1 M)	2 (1 M, 1 F)	5.4
Did not know	16	11	26	94.6

However, about 14.3 % of the people interviewed in three towns responded that they drank Tsheringma tea 1-2 years back (Table 5 and 6).

Table 5: People who responded that they drank Tsheringma Herbal Tea before

People	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu	% (total)
Drank	1 (1 M)	1 (1 M)	6 (2 M, 4 F)	14.3
Did not drink	15	11	22	85.7

Table 6: Since when people drank Tsheringma Herbal tea

Since	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu
1-2 yrs. back		1	5
2-3 yrs back	1	0	0
> 4 yrs back	0	0	1

Out of those people who drank Tsheringma Herbal Tea, 57.1 % said that its taste and flavour was good followed by 28.6% who said that the tea was very pleasant and good (Table 7).

Table 7: People's perception of the taste of Tsheringma Herbal Tea

Perception	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu	% (total)
Very nice and pleasant	2	1	13	28.6

Good	12	6	14	57.1
OK/ Satisfactory	2	4	0	10.7
Not good	0	1 *	1 **	3.4
* Smell is bad; ** No taste				

When asked to guess the price of the Tsheringma Herbal Tea, 33.93% expected the price to be between Nu. 15-50 while 26.79 % expected the price to be between Nu. 50-100 (Table 8).

Table 8: People's expectation of the price for a packet of Tsheringma Tea

Price range	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu	% (total)
Nu. 10 - 50	4	6	9	33.93
Nu. 50 - 100	7	2	6	26.79
Nu. 100 – 200	3	0	8	19.64
> Nu. 200	0	2	2	7.14
No response	2	2	3	12.50

Interestingly, about 53.57 % of the people interviewed responded that they drink tea 2-4 times in a day (Table 9).

Table 9: How many times people drink tea

Times	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu	% (total)
Rarely	1	1	1	5.36
1-2	5	2	10	30.36
2-4	10	5	15	53.57
> 4 times	0	4	2	10.71

And around 12 varieties of tea were available in the market at the time of the survey (Table 10). Of these, Mahamaya, Assam Valley, Uphaar and Brooked Bond were the four mostly sold by the shopkeepers (Table 11).

Table 10: Type of teas available in the visited shops

Types	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu
Mahamaya	1		2
Tata	1		1
Cinta	1		
Green tea	1		
Red Label	1		1
Taj Mahal			2
Amrit	2		1
Assam Valley	2		2
Golden eagle			1
Uphaar	3		3
Tez tea	1		
Lopchu	1		
Nandni			1
Lemon tea	1		
Brooke Bond	1		1

Table 11: Type of teas sold most in the shops

Types	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu
Mahamaya	1		1
Assam Valley	1		
Uphaar	2		3
Booke Bond	1		

And amongst the 12 teas sold in the markets, “Uphaar” was the tea people mostly drank (34.48%) (Table 12).

Table 12: What type of tea people drink most

Types	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu	% (total)
Mahamaya	1	0	3	6.70
Tata	1	0	6	12.07
Red Label	2	0	3	8.62
Taj Mahal	1	0	2	5.17
Amrit	1	2	0	5.17
Assam Valley	0	0	0	0.00
Uphaar	8	9	3	34.48
Lopchu	0	0	2	3.45
Nest tea	0	0	1	1.72
Lemon tea	0	0	1	1.72
Booke Bond	1	0	1	3.45
Jaril	0	1	0	1.72
Don't know name	2	1	6	15.51

When the shopkeepers were interviewed on their sourcing of teas, they responded that the teas were mostly sourced from the wholesale dealers in Gelephu. There were four wholesalers in Damphu and three wholesalers in Gelephu at the time of the survey. The retail price of different teas sold in their shops ranged between Nu. 15/100g - 150/120g (Table 13).

Table 13: What is the cost range of the various teas.

Cost	Damphu	Sarpang	Gelephu
Lowest	Nu. 0.15/g		Nu. 0.14/g
Highest	Nu. 1.25/g		Nu. 0.188/g
Tsheringma	Nu. 3.2/g		

Interpretation and Conclusions

- Considering the limited knowledge of the people on the Tsheringma tea it indicates that the market promotion for the tea is very weak or non existent.
- The price for the tea seems to be reasonable as most of the people expected it to be around Nu. 100, some people even guessed the price to be as high as Nu. 500 per packet. However, most of the expatriate businessmen in Gelephu and Sarpang towns expected the price to be below Nu. 50. This is probably because of their knowledge of the different Assam teas available at cheap prices and also their limited knowledge on the herbal teas.
- The flavour of the tea is felt to be good by most people and some people went on to say that the tea would be very useful to quench thirst in the hot areas. People in the older age group like the medicinal smell more as compared to the lower age group.
- The highly consumed tea in all the towns is the “Uphaar” tea which is very cheap i.e. Nu. 10 for a packet of 50g. This indicates that we have to either make smaller packets which people

can afford or look for a cheaper tea if we have to target the people in the low income groups which form the major portion of the population.

- (e) There is a potential for the Tsheringma tea in the southern areas given the views of the people that they liked the tea and its claimed benefits. Most health conscious people would opt for such a tea although it may take some time for people to adapt to the new life styles.

Recommendations

- (a) There is a need to promote Tsheringma tea through any mass media to increase awareness of the people on its benefits and sources so as to increase the domestic sales.
- (b) A team from the PRU, ITMS could make a visit where all the products of Unit could be displaced and promoted in the major towns. Such activities would also increase people's awareness of the traditional medicine system and the demand for the products and services could be increased.
- (c) One distributor in each town could be identified initially so as to test the market. Most of the people said that they were not interested to be distributors but they would definitely be interested to buy for themselves and for sale.
- (d) Possibilities should be explored to bring out tea of cheaper cost for domestic market for low income group.

Limitations of the survey

- (a) The survey was conducted only in the towns and does not represent the market scenario of the whole District including the rural areas.
- (b) The perception of the taste and flavour of the tea is debatable although most said that it was good. Our culture and nature of being modest and not disappointing other people could also play a part in the positive responses given by the respondents.
- (c) The question on the expected price for the product may not give the real market price scenario since in many cases people could not guess the prices. People are not used to such economic/cost valuations because of their limited knowledge. Nevertheless the figures indicate some sort of opinion of the people interviewed.