

A Survey of Young People's Tea Beverage Brands and Analysis of Development Paths in the Context of Rural Revitalization

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How to cite this paper: Li, X., Jiao, Z. R., & Fan, J. Q. (2026). A Survey of Young People's Tea Beverage Brands and Analysis of Development Paths in the Context of Rural Revitalization. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 14, 488-509.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2026.1410023>

Received: August 20, 2026

Accepted: October 23, 2026

Published: October 26, 2026

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the comprehensive advancement of the rural revitalization strategy, the tea industry, as a traditional advantageous industry in China and a pillar industry in many tea-producing counties, bears the dual mission of promoting farmers' income growth and upgrading the rural industrial structure. However, while upstream tea-producing areas possess high-quality tea resources and rich cultural heritage, there exists a significant value perception gap between downstream new-style tea beverage consumption markets, represented by younger demographics, and the traditional tea industry. This study takes adolescent students under 18 years old as its research subjects, employs a questionnaire survey method, and conducts empirical research around dimensions such as tea drinking behavior, consumption preferences, market perceptions, and acceptance of innovative products. A total of 30 valid questionnaires were collected. The findings reveal that: 1) young people's tea drinking behavior exhibits a "high penetration, low frequency" pattern, with less than 20% being high-frequency tea drinkers; 2) sensory experience is the core of consumption decisions, Subjectively perceived health value is a key incremental driver for attracting young consumers; 3) the traditional tea market faces a severe trust crisis, with "uneven quality" and "confusing and non-transparent pricing" as two core consumption barriers; and 4) product innovation demands are concentrated in three directions: healthiness, convenience, and flavor enhancement. On this basis, this paper proposes development path recommendations including lowering the entry threshold through "tea +" form innovation, creating tea culture communication methods suited for young people, scenario-based brand seeding, and cross-industry feedback to rural industries. This study provides exploratory reference for local tea brands to precisely align

with young consumer demand and achieve a virtuous cycle of “consumer-side feedback to production-side” under the rural revitalization strategy.

Keywords

Rural Revitalization, Tea Beverage Brands, Adolescent Consumption, Questionnaire Survey, Development Paths

1. Introduction

Rural revitalization is a major policy decision and deployment put forward at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, aimed at fundamentally addressing issues concerning agriculture, rural areas, and farmers, and achieving agricultural and rural modernization (Central Committee of the Communist Party of China & State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2025). In 2024, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued the Rural Revitalization Plan (2024-2027), which set forth the requirement for achieving full-chain upgrading of rural industries. In 2026, the State Council issued the 15th Five-Year Plan for Accelerating Agricultural and Rural Modernization, emphasizing that advancing comprehensive rural revitalization should serve as the overarching guideline, with the goal of achieving full rural revitalization by 2035 (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2026). Under such a strategic background, it is an important issue to leverage the distinctive resources of each region, combined with current market demand and people's livelihood needs, to enable agricultural products to generate greater economic value and allow farmers to share in industrial value-added benefits.

The tea industry is a traditional advantageous industry in China, possessing a long historical and cultural heritage, a complete supply chain, and robust market demand. According to the Blue Book on the Development of Regional Public Brands of Chinese Tea, as the world's largest tea-producing country, China's total tea production reached 3.92 million tons in 2025, accounting for 53.9% of the global total, with the entire industrial chain scale exceeding 1 trillion yuan. In 2025, the scale of China's new-style tea beverage market reached 374.93 billion yuan, and the comprehensive output value of the entire industrial chain, including traditional tea, new-style tea beverages, and deep processing, was estimated to reach 1.15 trillion yuan (Wei, Hu, & Shan, 2026). Notably, the consumption of new-style tea beverages among young groups, primarily school students, has been continuously rising and will become the main force in the future tea beverage consumption market. The pursuit and consumption motivation of high school students have opened new market outlets for the upstream tea industry, and tea beverage industries that align with market demand are becoming people's livelihood industries that promote the Healthy China strategy.

However, upstream rural tea-producing areas possess high-quality tea raw ma-

terial resources and a profound accumulation of tea culture (Weng & Zhang, 2026), yet downstream young consumer groups generally lack knowledge about tea origins, variety grades, production processes, and traditional tea ceremonies, and their brand awareness is highly concentrated on end brands rather than origin production areas. Based on this, this study raises the following core questions: In the context of the rural revitalization era, how should tea beverage brands targeting young school groups gain insights into the preference characteristics of their target consumer groups? How can they, through precise market positioning and brand strategies, empower the upstream rural tea industry chain in reverse, thereby achieving the win-win goal of “brand growth” and “rural shared prosperity”?

This study adopts the questionnaire survey method as its primary research approach. It aims to investigate young consumer groups’ subjective preferences for tea beverages, consumption motivations, and brand perceptions, intending to depict a multidimensional portrait of contemporary young tea beverage consumers and, based on this, to propose development path recommendations for local tea brands targeting the youth market.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Questionnaire Design and Dimensional Construction

This study employs a self-designed questionnaire as the research tool, with questions structured around five major dimensions: demographic attributes, tea drinking behavior, consumption preferences, market perceptions, and innovation demand. The questionnaire consists of four sections: the first part collects respondents’ demographic information (gender, age, occupation); the second part investigates tea drinking frequency, preferred tea types, drinking scenarios, and level of tea knowledge; the third part measures consumption behavior characteristics such as purchasing factors, consumption budgets, purchase channels, and packaging preferences; and the fourth part focuses on new-style tea beverage consumption habits, acceptance of “tea +” innovative products, and consumption barriers.

To clarify the scope of measurement, this study formulates unified operational definitions for core concepts:

- 1) Frequent tea consumers: Based on the four-level frequency classification in the questionnaire, respondents who report “daily consumption” and “multiple-times-per-week consumption” are defined as the high-frequency consumer group;
- 2) “Tea-plus” products: Cross-border derivative products with tea as the core base that break through the forms of traditional tea beverages, covering categories such as tea-flavored snacks, tea-flavored ice cream, and tea-based compound drinks;
- 3) Tea cognition: Comprises two dimensions, namely category cognition (understanding of the six major tea categories) and consumption-related knowledge cognition (knowledge about tea-drinking adaptation for different seasons), measured by self-reported ratings from respondents;

4) Pain points in the tea beverage market: Subjectively perceived negative market problems reported by respondents, covering five categories: quality, price, knowledge threshold, marketing, and product form, measured by the frequency of mentions.

On this basis, questionnaire items were designed around these five major dimensions.

2.2. Survey Subjects and Sampling Method

The core research subjects of this survey were middle-school adolescents under 18 years old. An electronic questionnaire was developed via the Wenjuanxing platform. Questionnaire responses were collected through targeted distribution channels including high-school WeChat study groups, QQ study groups, and campus notice boards.

Inclusion criteria for participants: 1) adolescents aged 18 years old or below; 2) having prior experience of tea-beverage consumption; 3) capable of completing the questionnaire independently; 4) voluntary participation in this survey.

Exclusion criteria: invalid responses characterized by mismatched age, consecutive identical answers, logical inconsistencies, and other problematic response patterns.

To guarantee compliance in data usage, participant rights protection and privacy management were implemented throughout the research. A full informed-consent procedure was carried out for all valid samples. For under-18 minor participants, who constituted the majority of the sample, community administrators from schools distributed an electronic Informed Consent Form for Research Data Usage to students' parents. The form fully disclosed the research theme, purposes of questionnaire data, participants' rights, and privacy-protection measures. Questionnaire data from respective students were incorporated into the final valid analytical sample only after guardians provided signed confirmation and explicit consent for data use in this academic study.

In terms of privacy protection, the questionnaire was fully anonymous. No personally identifiable information such as names, student IDs, or specific residential addresses was collected. Upon completion of the study, full raw datasets were de-identified; all background fields linking to personal identity, including IP addresses and account identifiers, were removed. The data are used exclusively for academic statistical analysis and publication outputs of this project. No external data sharing or commercial application is permitted, and access is restricted exclusively to core research team members.

2.3. Questionnaire Distribution and Recovery

The questionnaire was officially distributed online in July 2026 for a two-week period. Multiple reminders were sent in group chats during this period to improve response rates. A total of 35 questionnaires were distributed and 35 were retrieved. After manual screening, 31 questionnaires met the inclusion criteria. All 31 valid

questionnaires were fully completed with no invalid responses such as patterned answering. Finally, there were 31 valid questionnaires. The questionnaire recovery rate was 100%, and the valid response rate was 88.5%.

3. Analysis of Survey Results

3.1. Survey Sample Structure

Among the 31 respondents, all participants were school students under the age of 18, 23 were male (74.19%) and 8 were female (25.81%), with a sex ratio of approximately 2.87:1 (**Figure 1**). This gender structure is closely related to the source channels of the survey sample (mainly a certain high school and its surrounding social circles). However, it is worth noting that despite the small sample size of females, cross-analysis shows that the proportion of women drinking tea daily is higher than that of men, and women's preference for floral tea reaches and with an overall higher consumption frequency of new-style tea beverages than men. Statistically, certain differences in tea-drinking frequency and category preference were observed between male and female respondents in this sample. Given the small female subsample size ($n = 8$), this finding is only descriptive for the current sample. The effect of gender on tea consumption behaviour can be formulated as a hypothesis to be tested in future research.

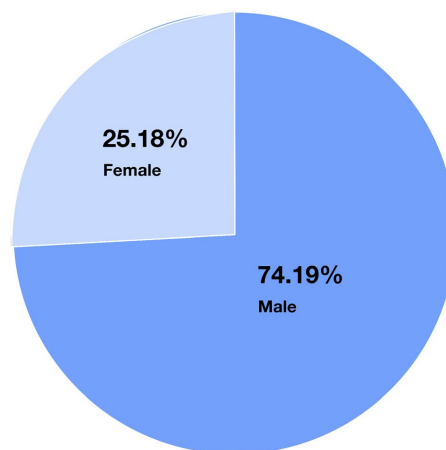


Figure 1. Gender distribution of respondents.

3.2. Analysis of Tea Drinking Behavior Characteristics

3.2.1. Tea Drinking Frequency

The survey results show that 63.33% of respondents only “drink tea occasionally,” 16.67% “basically do not drink tea,” only 6.67% drink tea daily, and 13.33% drink tea multiple times per week. The total proportion of high-frequency tea drinkers (daily + multiple times per week) is less than 20% (**Figure 2**). This data indicates that tea drinking has not yet formed a stable daily habit among the surveyed adolescent groups; tea consumption is mainly random and scenario-triggered, and is still far from becoming a “staple” or “habitual” practice. However, from another

perspective, this also means that there is enormous room for cultivation in this group's tea drinking market—if the entry barrier can be lowered through appropriate product forms and consumption scenarios, low-frequency or even non-tea drinkers may be effectively converted.

Options	Stub-Total	Proportion
Occasionally drinking	22	70.97%
Basically don't drink it	3	9.68%
Drink it every day	2	6.45%
3-5 times/week	2	6.45%
1-2 times/week	2	6.45%
This questions is valid for the number of entries filled	31	

Figure 2. Tea-drinking frequency of respondents.

3.2.2. Preferred Tea Types

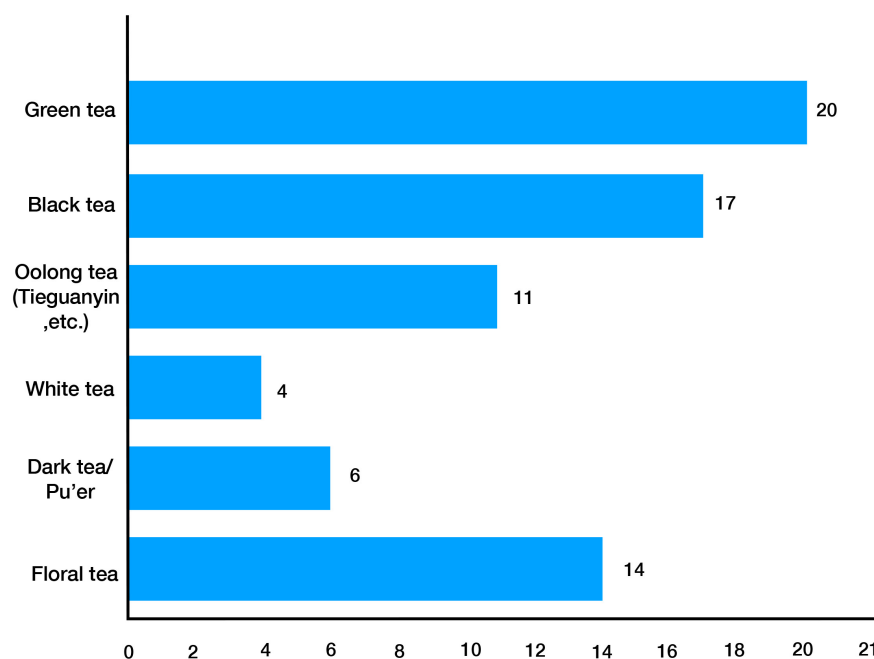


Figure 3. Types of tea commonly consumed by respondents.

In terms of tea type preferences, green tea (56.67%), black tea (53.33%), and floral tea (50%) are the three most frequently consumed categories by the surveyed group, followed by white tea (30%), oolong tea (26.67%), and Pu'er tea (16.67%), with dark tea showing the weakest preference (6.67%) (**Figure 3**). Gender-based

differences in preference are noteworthy: Based on the sample data, male respondents showed a stronger preference for green tea and black tea. Among female respondents ($n = 8$), 75% chose scented tea, a higher proportion than that of male respondents. This difference suggests that scented tea may serve as a market entry point targeting female consumers. However, its market effectiveness remains to be verified by follow-up large-sample studies.

3.2.3. Drinking Scenarios

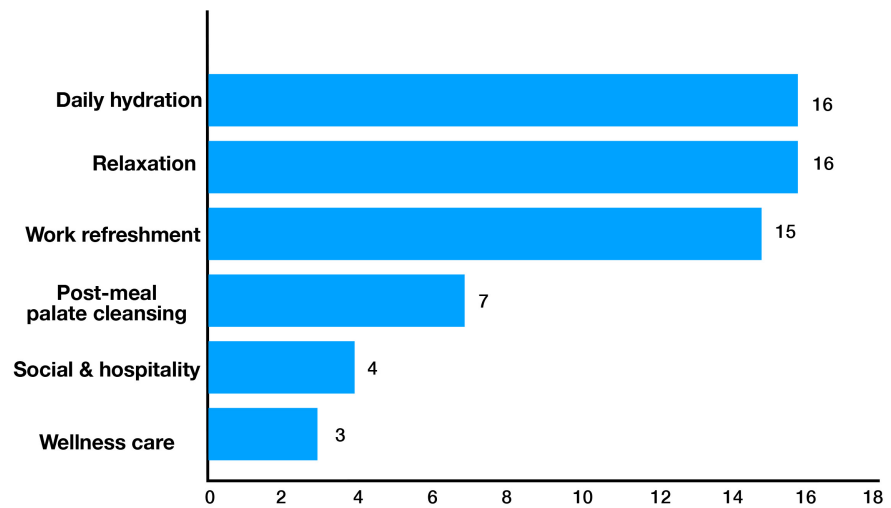


Figure 4. Tea-Drinking scenarios of respondents.

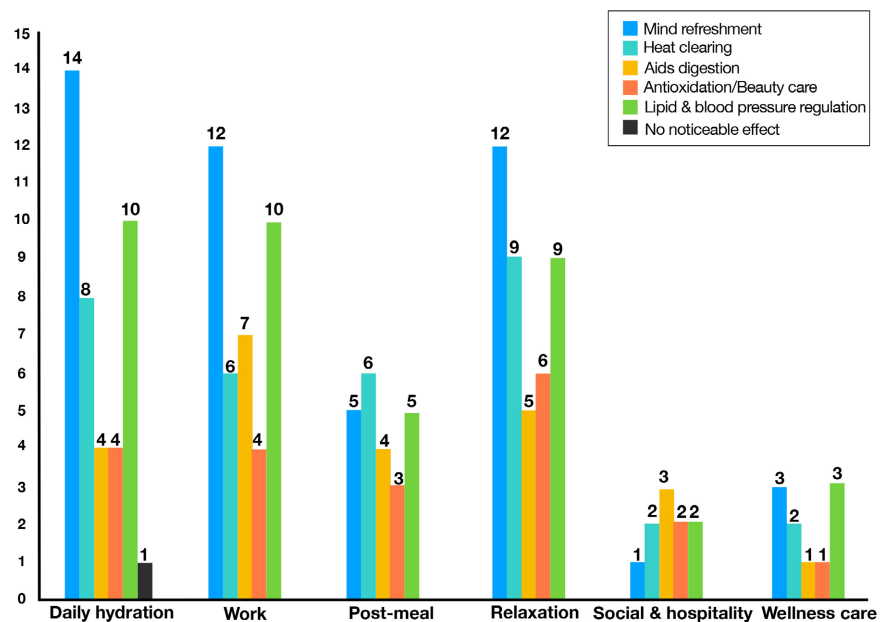


Figure 5. Perceived tea benefits of respondents across different scenarios.

Regarding the main scenarios for drinking tea, “Daily hydration” and “Relaxation” ranks first in mention rate. Sixteen respondents selected each option. The study scenario and post-meal scenario were chosen by 15 and 7 respondents re-

spectively. As minors, they have limited opportunities to receive guests at home, yet 4 participants reported serving tea to visitors (**Figure 4**). A cross-analysis between tea-drinking scenarios and perceived health benefits of tea revealed that adolescent consumers in China still value the perceived functional effects of tea. Many participants regard tea drinking as a way to relieve “internal heat”, a concept in traditional Chinese medicine. Subjectively, respondents believe tea possesses certain medicinal and health-preserving benefits, such as aiding digestion, improving skin condition and lowering blood lipids (**Figure 5**).

3.2.4. Level of Tea Knowledge

Respondents generally have weak tea knowledge reserves. Only 45.16% said they “know a little” about the six major tea categories, 45.16% “have only heard the names,” and 9.68% “know nothing at all” (**Figure 6**). Awareness of seasonal tea drinking knowledge (drink green in spring, drink cool in summer, drink oolong in autumn, drink red in winter) is even weaker, with only 12.90% indicating they “fully understand” the knowledge of drinking different teas suitable for different seasons (**Figure 7**). The existence of this knowledge threshold both explains why most respondents have not yet formed stable tea drinking habits—the knowledge threshold itself constitutes a psychological barrier to consumption decisions—and suggests that brands can reduce the entry barrier and build trust through light-weight knowledge popularization.

Options	Stub-Total	Proportion
I know a little	14	45.16%
I've only heard the name	14	45.16%
I have no idea at all	3	9.68%
Very familiar (able to distinguish types, origins and characteristics)	0	0.00%
This questions is valid for the number of entries filled	31	

Figure 6. Respondents' knowledge of tea categories.

Options	Stub-Total	Proportion
Heard but didn't understand	16	51.61%
This is the first time I've heard of it	11	35.48%
It's very clear	4	12.90%
This questions is valid for the number of entries filled	31	

Figure 7. Respondents' perceptions of seasonal tea-drinking customs.

3.3. Analysis of Consumption and Purchase Preferences

3.3.1. Core Purchasing Factors

Among the many factors influencing product purchase, “taste/texture/flavor” tops the list with a mention of 28 people, followed by “aroma”. In contrast, attention to dimensions such as brand of tea and origin of tea leaves (7 people), “packaging design” (4 people) is significantly lower (**Figure 8**). This finding has dual implications: on one hand, young consumers show a pragmatic orientation of “returning to the product itself” in tea consumption, with sensory experience being the core of decision-making; On the other hand, it also indicates that mainstream tea brands generally have low brand awareness and value recognition among the young respondents in this sample. Respondents paid little attention to brand-related factors, which may result from the fact that the communication content and forms of existing brands fail to fit the consumption context of this group and have not built effective brand associations. In the perception of young consumers, traditional tea is linked with keywords such as “old-fashioned” and “outdated” (Li, 2022). New tea beverage brands popular among young people often do not merely sell tea leaves. The mechanism linking tea brand equity and youth consumption decisions can serve as a hypothesis direction for future research.

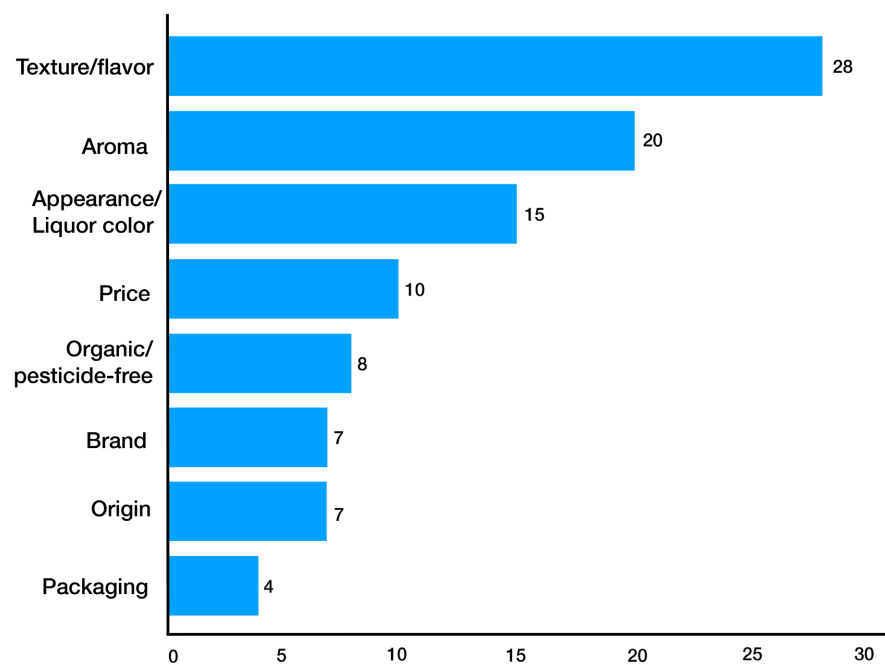


Figure 8. Respondents' concerns when buying tea products.

3.3.2. Consumption Budget

In self-consumption scenarios, 35.48% of respondents have a single tea purchase budget within 150 yuan, with 38.71% choosing affordable daily tea below 50 yuan, which directly aligns with the low-income characteristics of their student identity. The budget distribution in gifting scenarios shows a “bipolar concentration” feature—either choosing affordable gift boxes below 50 yuan or high-end gift boxes

above 500 yuan, with weak demand for mid-range prices (Figure 9). This finding suggests that the disposable pocket money of school students is not low, and their consumption values emphasize quality and taste. Tea brands can develop high-quality, low-priced portable products for students' self-consumption needs, while also laying out differentiated price-band product combinations for holiday gifting scenarios.

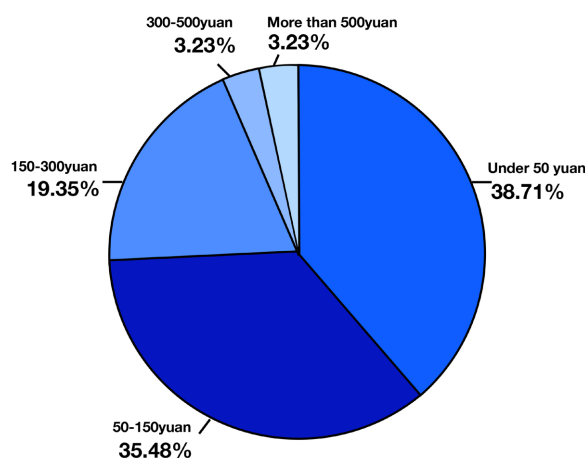


Figure 9. Tea purchase budget of respondents.

3.3.3. Purchase Channels

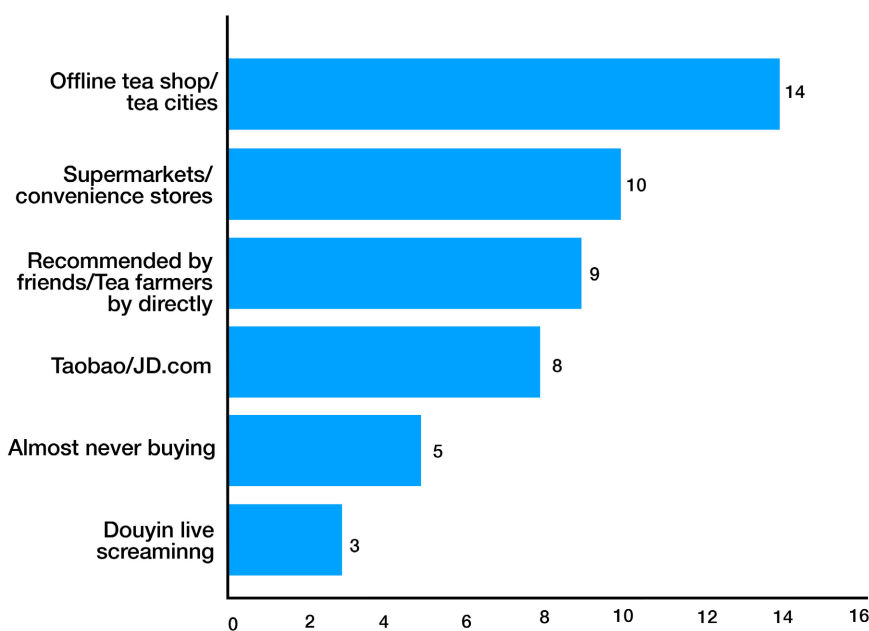


Figure 10. Purchasing channels of respondents.

The main channel for respondents to purchase tea is offline stores. Among the 31 respondents, 14 chose offline stores, accounting for 45.16% of all participants, which is consistent with the needs of middle school students' campus activities and social interactions. Notably, quite a few respondents also choose traditional

e-commerce platforms such as Taobao and JD.com, as well as offline supermarket convenience stores, to obtain tea products. However, due to restrictions on mobile phone usage, the penetration rate of live-streaming e-commerce platforms like Douyin is only 3 people (Figure 10). Minors have certain restrictions on online payments and parcel receipt, so offline channels and traditional e-commerce remain their main purchasing methods. However, from a market trend perspective, the share of Douyin live-streaming e-commerce in overall tea sales is rapidly rising; the low penetration rate of this channel in this survey to some extent reflects the misalignment between the underage group and mainstream consumption channels, rather than a lack of appeal of live-streaming channels themselves for young groups.

3.3.4. Packaging Preferences

To examine respondents' preferences for tea packaging across different consumption scenarios, this study employed multiple response analysis to statistically process the data on packaging type selection. Case percentages are reported, representing the proportion of respondents selecting a given packaging type relative to the total sample size ($N = 31$). Values in the figure indicate the number of respondents who selected each packaging type, and values in parentheses denote case percentages (relative to the total sample $N = 31$). This question allowed multiple responses; therefore, the sum of case percentages within each scenario does not equal 100% (Figure 11).

Tea Drinking Scenario Packaging Style	Daily hydration	Work	Post-meal	Relaxation	Social & hospitality	Wellness care	Total (Number of Selections)
Loose tea	3 (9.68)	2 (6.45)	1 (3.23)	1 (3.23)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	7
Tea bag	3 (9.68)	2 (6.45)	1 (3.23)	2 (6.45)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	8
Canned tea	5 (16.13)	3 (9.68)	2 (6.45)	4 (12.90)	2 (6.45)	0 (0.00)	16
Small vacuum-packaged	5 (16.13)	7 (22.58)	2 (6.45)	7 (22.58)	1 (3.23)	3 (9.68)	25
Gift box	0 (0.00)	1 (3.23)	1 (3.23)	2 (6.45)	1 (3.23)	3 (9.68)	8

Figure 11. Packaging preferences across different tea-drinking scenarios.

The results reveal clear divergence in packaging preferences across drinking scenarios. In terms of total selection counts for each packaging type, small vacuum-packed portions (25 selections) and canned tea (16 selections) were the most frequently chosen. Tea bags (8 selections), gift boxes (8 selections), and loose-leaf tea (7 selections) had comparable and lower selection frequencies.

When stratified by scenario: for daily hydration, canned tea and small vacuum-packed portions were tied for the highest share (16.13% each). Small vacuum-packed portions dominated both study and leisure relaxation scenarios (22.58% each); canned tea ranked second in leisure scenarios (12.90%). Fewer selections were observed for the post-meal scenario, where canned tea and small vacuum-

packed portions each accounted for 6.45%. Notably, canned tea (6.45%), gift boxes (3.23%), and small vacuum-packed portions (3.23%) were all selected in the social hospitality scenario, where gift boxes came into use. In the health-preservation scenario, small vacuum-packed portions and gift boxes were equally preferred (9.68% each).

In summary, small vacuum-packed portions and canned tea are the most dominant packaging formats for daily personal consumption. Gift boxes show a relatively higher adoption rate in social hospitality and health-preservation contexts, reflecting that packaging needs vary across usage scenarios.

3.4. Analysis of Acceptance of New-Style Tea Beverages and Innovative Products

3.4.1. Current Status of New-Style Tea Beverage Consumption

30 respondents stated that they consume, and even frequently drink, new-style tea beverages such as milk tea and fruit tea, accounting for 96.77% of all respondents. In contrast, earlier data showed that only 6.67% of respondents drink traditional tea daily (**Figure 12**). Juxtaposing these two sets of data reveals a striking contrast: the penetration rate of new-style tea beverages is far higher than that of traditional tea. Existing studies have verified that adolescents are highly sensitive to beverage taste and generally prefer mild, low-irritation flavours. Traditional whole-leaf tea often has low acceptance due to its bitter and astringent taste and unrefined flavour profile. (Huang et al., 2026); young people do not dislike tea; rather, they have fallen in love with another form of tea.

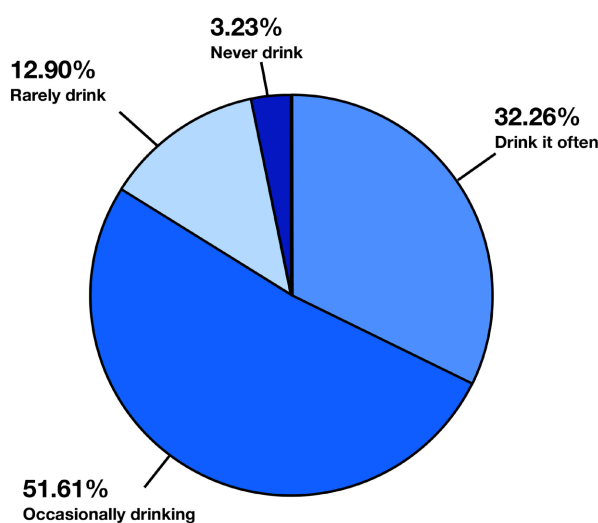


Figure 12. Respondents' perceptions of their own consumption frequency of new-style tea beverages (Milk Tea, Fruit Tea, and Plain Tea Drinks).

Observing the new-style tea beverage brands that have emerged on the market in recent years, relying on products such as tea + milk, tea + fruit juice, tea + coffee, tea-flavored alcoholic beverages, and tea-flavored snacks, Sexy Tea, through a fully direct-operated model, had opened 764 stores by the end of 2024.

Another brand, Chagee, relying on a franchise system for business expansion, had reached 2513 stores globally, gaining recognition from a large number of young consumers and establishing brand loyalty (Luo, 2025).

This means that if traditional tea brands can retain the essential advantages of tea while drawing on the innovative logic of new-style tea beverages in product form, flavor blending, and consumption experience, they are expected to activate a vast potential consumer base.

3.4.2. Acceptance of “Tea +” Innovative Products

A cross-analysis was conducted in the questionnaire between the frequency of new-style tea beverage consumption and respondents’ willingness to try “tea +” products, with a total sample size of $N = 31$ (Figure 13). Within the sample, new-style tea beverage consumption was dominated by “drink occasionally” (51.61%) and “drink frequently” (32.26%); “seldom drink” accounted for 12.90%, and “never drink” only 3.23%.

Willingness to try “tea+” products Drinking frequency of new-style tea beverages	Very willing	Might give it a try	Not very interested	Not willing at all	Total (Number of Selections)
Drink it often	6(60.00%)	4(40.00%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	10
Occasionally drinking	4(25.00%)	10(62.50%)	2(12.50%)	0(0.00%)	16
Rarely drink	0(0.00%)	2(50.00%)	2(50.00%)	0(0.00%)	4
Never drink	0(0.00%)	1(100%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	1

Figure 13. Relationship between new-style tea beverage consumption frequency and respondents’ willingness to try “Tea +” products.

Regarding willingness to try “tea +” products, respondents held an overall positive attitude. Those who selected “very willing” made up 32.26%, while 54.84% chose “willing to give it a try”. Together, these two categories accounted for 87.10%. Only 12.90% reported “not very interested”, and no respondent indicated complete unwillingness to try.

Further analysis revealed a clear positive association between consumption frequency and trial willingness. Among respondents who frequently consumed new-style tea beverages, the proportion of those who were “very willing” reached 60.00%, markedly higher than the overall sample average. Occasional consumers were dominated by the “willing to give it a try” response (62.50%). Among rare consumers, the share of respondents who were “not very interested” rose to 50.00%.

This indicates that higher consumption frequency of new-style tea beverages corresponds to greater acceptance of innovative “tea +” products. Frequent consumers of new-style tea beverages constitute the potential core target group for “tea +” products. It should be noted that the “never drink” group contained only

one participant; its proportional representativeness is limited and serves merely for descriptive reference. Constrained by the small sample size and low expected frequencies, a chi-square significance test was not performed in this study. Young consumers objectively demonstrate a pursuit of new-style tea beverages and a desire to break free from traditional tea-drinking scenarios (Yan et al., 2024).

3.4.3. Expectations for Product Innovation

Regarding the most desired new product features (multiple-choice question), 41.94% of respondents chose “low-sugar, zero-calorie, light wellness formula,” and 41.94% expected “portable small packaging,” reflecting the two core demands of healthiness and convenience (Figure 14).

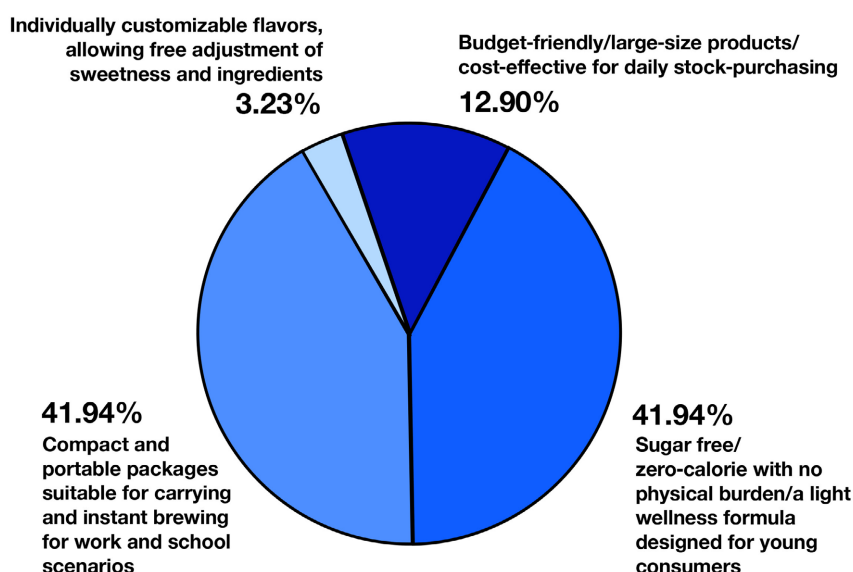


Figure 14. Respondents' desired for new products.

Multiple-response analysis was employed to investigate respondents' preferences for innovative directions of new tea products (N = 31) (Figure 15). The results indicated that traditional tea with innovative taste had the largest number of selections, totaling 20 respondents, with a case percentage of 64.52%. It was followed by convenient ready-to-drink tea (17 respondents, 54.84%) and blended tea with additional flavors (15 respondents, 48.39%). These three categories represented the most appealing innovation types for respondents. Functional tea with specific health benefits was favored by 35.48% of respondents. In contrast, DIY interactive brewing tea, mood-healing scenario-oriented tea and tea-flavored derivative products exhibited relatively low acceptance, with case percentages of 29.03%, 25.81% and 22.58% respectively. It can be concluded that consumers are more receptive to innovations that retain the traditional tea base while making improvements in taste, drinking convenience and flavor. By comparison, highly interactive DIY products, emotion-oriented scenario-based products and cross-border derivative products have limited market acceptance.

Innovation direction	Number of selections	Case percentage
Traditional tea with innovative taste	20	64.52%
Convenient ready-to-drink tea	17	54.84%
Blended tea with additional flavors (tea-fruit, tea-herb)	15	48.39%
Functional tea with specific health benefits	11	35.48%
DIY interactive brewing/playful tea (color-changing tea, self-flavored tea)	9	29.03%
Mood-healing scenario-oriented tea (good-night tea, stress-relief tea)	8	25.81%
Tea-flavored derivative products (tea perfume, tea-scented stationery)	7	22.58%

Figure 15. Respondents' purchase intention for different types of new products.

3.5. Analysis of Marketing

Negative perceptions among consumers were highly concentrated. Uneven product quality was the most frequently cited problem, with 24 selections (77.42%), followed by confusing and non-transparent pricing (15 selections, 48.39%). These two items represented the primary pain points perceived by respondents. Excessive and impractical marketing was mentioned by 32.26% of respondents. “Too traditional and lacking fashion sense” and “high knowledge threshold for beginners” shared the same case percentage of 25.81% (Figure 16). Overall, quality and pricing constitute major consumer concerns regarding the tea market. Excessive marketing, old-fashioned product styles and high industry knowledge barriers also act as non-negligible consumption obstacles.

Perceived problem	Number of selections	Case percentage
Uneven product quality	24	77.42%
Confusing and non-transparent pricing	15	48.39%
Excessive and impractical marketing	10	32.26%
Too traditional and lacking fashion sense	8	25.81%
High knowledge threshold for beginners	8	25.81%

Figure 16. Negative market problems reported by respondents.

Combining this finding with the earlier data on purchasing factors reveals a deeper contradiction: respondents value taste and aroma most in their purchase decisions, yet their ability to judge tea quality is constrained by cognitive thresholds, while simultaneously facing the information asymmetry dilemma of “uneven quality” and “confusing pricing” on the market side. In other words, consumers value quality but cannot effectively identify it, and care about price but cannot clearly judge whether it is reasonable—this contradiction precisely explains why brand trust is difficult to establish. Eliminating opacity in quality and pricing, as well as lowering the knowledge threshold, is therefore not only a measure to address consumer perceived consumption barriers but also a strategic opportunity for brands to gain trust and establish differentiated positioning.

This study conducted a questionnaire survey among 31 respondents to evaluate the attractiveness of different marketing approaches using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 = not attractive at all, 2 = slightly unattractive, 3 = neutral, 4 = moderately attractive, and 5 = very attractive. Six marketing evaluation dimensions were included: aesthetic-limited packaging, co-branded IP campaigns, celebrity/influencer endorsement, promotional offers, new-flavor development, and health-concept promotion. The results yielded an overall mean score of 3.23, indicating clear stratification in the attractiveness of various marketing strategies.

New-flavor development (mean = 3.87) and health-concept promotion (mean = 3.81) ranked the top two. Approximately one-third (35.48%) of respondents assigned the maximum score of 5 (very attractive) to both items. The combined proportion of respondents giving scores of 4 - 5 (moderately attractive + very attractive) reached 67.74% and 61.29% respectively for the two dimensions, considerably higher than for other strategies. They were also the only two marketing tactics with mean scores above 3.5. This suggests that content- and efficacy-oriented marketing were most favored in this survey. Marketing driven by price incentives and visual appeal showed moderate attractiveness, whereas traffic-driven and gimmick-based marketing performed the poorest, with 51.61% of respondents selecting scores of 1 - 2, meaning more than half explicitly expressed disapproval.

Respondents were more susceptible to marketing related to product attributes such as new flavors and health concepts, while showing low acceptance for marketing relying on external traffic and trending topics such as celebrity endorsements and IP co-branding. Consistent with the previously identified tendency of young tea-beverage consumers to prioritize health and cost-effectiveness over aesthetics and social value, these findings imply that marketing resources should be allocated more to product-value-oriented content rather than merely pursuing publicity generated by endorsements and IP collaborations (**Figure 17**).

3.6. Analysis of Attractive Factors and Consumption Drivers

When exploring the question “What attracts young people most to drink tea”, “perception of being healthy and sugar-free”, “good taste with reasonable prices” and “easy to prepare” were the most-frequently chosen options. Among the sample of 31 respondents, 20 participants (64.52%) selected the first option, while 16 participants (51.61%) chose each of the latter two. By contrast, the proportions for “cultural atmosphere” (38.71%), “social sharing value” (22.58%) and “attractive packaging” (9.35%) were relatively low (**Figure 18**).

These findings challenge a prevalent market assumption that young consumers purchase tea beverages mainly out of aesthetic appeal and social attributes. At least for the respondents in this study, subjective demand for health value and cost-effectiveness constitute the core driving factors. Aesthetics and social value are merely the icing on the cake instead of key decision-making variables. This finding aligns with conclusions from comparable existing studies: the core drivers of tea beverage consumption among young people centre on taste, health perceptions and convenience (Li, 2021).

	1 pt (Not attractive at all)	2 pts (Somewhat unattractive)	3 pts (Neutral)	4 pts (Moderately attractive)	5 pts (Very attractive)	Mean
Aesthetic-limited packaging	5 (16.13%)	3 (9.68%)	11 (35.48%)	9 (29.03%)	3 (9.68%)	3.06
Co-branded IP campaigns	7 (22.58%)	4 (12.90%)	9 (29.03%)	7 (22.58%)	4 (12.90%)	2.9
Celebrity/Influencer endorsemen	9 (29.03%)	7 (22.58%)	8 (25.81%)	4 (12.90%)	3 (9.68%)	2.52
Promotional offers	4 (12.90%)	3 (9.68%)	12 (38.71%)	7 (22.58%)	5 (16.13%)	3.19
New-flavor development	2 (6.45%)	1 (3.23%)	7 (22.58%)	10 (32.26%)	11 (35.48%)	3.87
Health-concept promotion	1 (3.23%)	3 (9.68%)	8 (25.81%)	8 (25.81%)	11 (35.48%)	3.81
Subtotal	28 (15.05%)	21 (11.29%)	55 (29.57%)	45 (24.19%)	37 (19.89%)	3.23

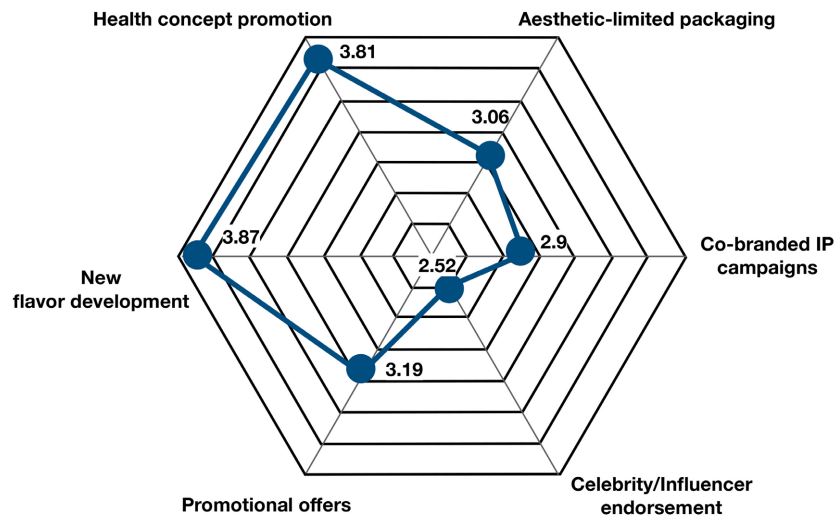


Figure 17. Respondents' preferences for promotion methods.

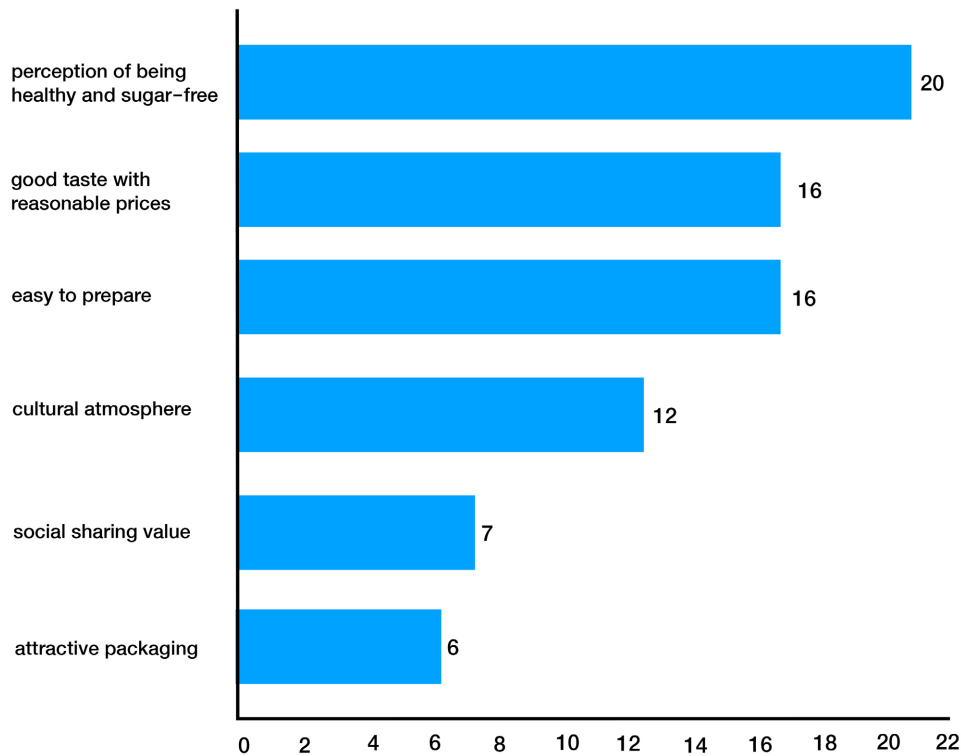


Figure 18. Factors that respondents believe can attract young people to drink tea.

4. Directions for Brand Operation Optimization

Based on the above data analysis, the surveyed groups' expectations for tea beverage brand optimization are mainly concentrated in the following directions:

In terms of product strategy, respondents hope that brands will create low-sugar, zero-calorie, light wellness product lines with clear labeling of calories and ingredients, promote portable forms such as individually wrapped tea bags and instant dissolvable tea, and simultaneously develop flower-fruit blended flavored teas to lower the entry threshold for traditional tea, using floral and green teas as entry points to gradually guide consumers toward more complex flavors such as oolong and Pu'er tea.

In terms of market communication, respondents expect brands to disclose tea origin information, establish clear grading and quality standards, and reduce consumption decision risks through sample/trial packs, thereby addressing the two core consumption barriers of uneven quality and non-transparent pricing. In product communication, the focus should be on health education and new product taste evaluations, and it is essential to use language adapted to young people, simplify obscure tea culture terminology, and disseminate knowledge through lightweight formats such as short videos, animation, and infographics.

In terms of channel and scenario, brands may consider setting up on-campus tea bars, experience stores, and other scenario-based touchpoints to achieve brand seeding through immersive experiences.

5. Tiered Operational Strategy Recommendations

Based on differences in consumption frequency and purchasing scenarios, this survey recommends adopting the following tiered operational strategies:

Low-frequency entry-level users: Use floral tea and green tea as traffic-attracting categories, emphasize stress relief and healthy low-calorie selling points, and lower the first purchase barrier through low-unit-price, small-format products.

High-frequency core users: Highlight the flavor complexity, refreshing, and digestion-aiding functions of tea, and enhance user stickiness and repurchase rates through membership systems and limited-edition products.

Gifting scenario users: Simultaneously develop affordable entry-level gift boxes (below 50 yuan) and high-end gift boxes (around 500 yuan), creating a clear scenario differentiation from the self-consumption portable product line.

6. Research Conclusions

Through the questionnaire survey method, this study examined the behavioral characteristics, preference tendencies, and market perceptions of young groups, primarily adolescent students under 18, in tea beverage consumption, and drew the following main conclusions:

First, young groups' tea drinking behavior exhibits the typical characteristics of high penetration but low frequency. Although less than 7% of respondents have no contact with tea at all, over 60% remain at the shallow consumption stage of

“drinking occasionally,” with high-frequency tea drinkers totaling less than 20%.

Second, sensory experience is similarly the core of consumption decisions for younger consumers, and subjective perceptions of health value serve as a key incremental factor appealing to young groups. On one hand, this indicates that young consumers show a pragmatic orientation of “returning to the product itself” in tea selection; on the other hand, it shows that the brand equity of existing tea brands has not yet been effectively established among this group. In terms of attractive factors, the concept of “healthy and sugar-free” receives high attention, meaning that tea brands targeting young people should prioritize resources on product quality, perceived health value, and cost-effectiveness, rather than over-investing in packaging aesthetics and social marketing.

Third, in this sample, young respondents reported relatively weak overall perceptions of trust in the traditional tea market. Young consumers value product quality yet lack effective capacity for quality identification; they care about prices but struggle to judge whether pricing is reasonable. This trust gap arising from information asymmetry represents a potential avenue for brands to build differentiated competitive advantages.

Fourth, the direction of product innovation demand is clear and concentrated: making tea drinking simpler, less burdensome, and more aligned with young people’s lifestyles. In terms of product form, individually wrapped tea bags are most popular in self-consumption scenarios, revealing that convenience, quantification, and portability are key packaging strategies adapted to students’ daily consumption scenarios.

Fifth, research limitations must be acknowledged. Due to sample source constraints, the sample in this study has certain imbalances in age, gender, and occupational distribution, and the total sample size is relatively small. Therefore, the above conclusions should be positioned as exploratory findings for a specific group rather than an overall judgment of the young consumer market. Its core value lies in revealing trends and identifying problems, providing a hypothesis foundation and directional guidance for subsequent larger-scale empirical research.

7. Development Path Recommendations in the Context of Rural Revitalization

Starting from the product demands of adolescents, this study proposes the following development path recommendations for local tea brands targeting the youth market, especially regional public brands and origin-based tea enterprises closely related to rural revitalization.

7.1. Lower the Entry Barrier through “Tea +” Form Innovation

The coexistence of high penetration of new-style tea beverages and low-frequency consumption of traditional tea suggests that brands need to redefine products for young people as “upgraded forms of tea” rather than “traditional tea.” Specifically:

first, develop transition products such as flower-fruit blended teas and low-sugar instant teas that sit between traditional tea and new-style tea beverages, enabling consumers accustomed to milk tea to smoothly transition to pure leaf tea consumption; second, prioritize lightweight packaging forms such as individually wrapped tea bags and portable packs, adapted to students' needs for portability and quick brewing; third, create low-sugar, zero-calorie light wellness product lines with clear labeling of calories, origin, and ingredients, to respond to consumers' demands for perceived health benefits while addressing information opacity. From the perspective of rural revitalization, the tea raw materials used in these innovative products come directly from tea-producing villages, and product form innovation is essentially about finding new outlets for upstream tea—not changing tea itself, but changing the way tea is delivered, so that high-quality village tea reaches young people in a form they are willing to accept.

7.2. Create Tea Culture Communication for Young People

Young consumers are not indifferent to tea drinking culture and tea quality; rather, they find it difficult to accept traditional and complex tea culture knowledge, and traditional tea ceremony scenarios and cultural communication are also hard to reach young people's living scenarios. By relying on “tea +” form products and embedding tea culture knowledge that young people are willing to accept into product marketing activities and packaging descriptions, it can help establish cognitive awareness for future purchasing power.

7.3. Scenario-Based Brand Seeding and Cross-Industry Feedback to Rural Industries

The study found that respondents' purchasing channels are still mainly offline tea shops and traditional e-commerce, with extremely low penetration of live-streaming e-commerce, which is related to the particularity of the sample being mainly underage. Nevertheless, campus scenarios, as the most concentrated living space for this group, have irreplaceable value. After young people establish awareness and preference for tea brands from certain origins through experience, their sustained consumption demand will form stable order flows, which in reverse drive production in upstream tea-producing villages. Simultaneously, by relying on on-campus educational resources, we can develop tea culture study tour educational products, campus club activities, family tea tourism products, and supply base tea-picking experience tours, etc. Cross-industry products can, on one hand, boost tea supply volumes from the supply areas, and on the other hand, drive the tertiary industry in the villages where the tea gardens are located—this is precisely the realization path of “consumer-side feedback to production-side” in the sense of rural revitalization.

7.4. Research Limitations and Future Prospects

As an exploratory study, this research has the following major limitations that

need to be addressed in future research:

At the sample level, this survey's valid samples were predominantly high school students, with a total sample size of 31, and there was some imbalance in gender and age distribution. As an exploratory study adopting convenience sampling with a small sample, this research can only provide descriptive statistical findings and preliminary observation of trends. It cannot verify causal relationships between variables, and the conclusions lack broad generalisability. Future research may take the preliminary observations from this study, such as gender differences and associations between consumption behaviour and brand perception, as research hypotheses. Empirical testing could then be carried out by expanding the sample size, adopting random sampling methods and incorporating multivariate statistical analysis.

At the methodological level, due to sample size limitations, this study did not conduct reliability and validity tests or multivariate statistical inference analyses; conclusions are mainly based on descriptive statistics and cross-analysis, with explanatory power somewhat limited. Future research should, on the basis of larger samples, employ more reliability tests, exploratory factor analysis, multiple regression analysis, and other methods to enhance the quantitative depth and reliability of conclusions. In addition, this study currently mainly stays at the level of describing consumer-side behavior and preferences; we plan to further introduce methods such as structural equation modeling to empirically test the impact paths and effect sizes of various dimensions of tea beverage brand building on rural revitalization performance, such as tea farmers' income increase, industrial upgrading, and employment generation.

At the content level, this study mainly adopts the consumer perspective to explore market possibilities and has not yet explored the upstream perspectives of tea-producing area farmers and government administrators; the matching analysis between consumer-side preferences and production-side capabilities is not sufficiently in-depth. Furthermore, the geographical scope of this survey was not clearly delimited, and consumers from different regions may have significant differences in tea beverage preferences and cultural perceptions. Future research could further introduce a regional comparative perspective to examine the differentiated characteristics of young consumer groups in different regions and their implications for brand strategies.

In summary, this study, through questionnaire survey, reveals the tea beverage consumption profile of a specific young group mainly composed of adolescent students, validates that "sensory experience + health attributes + trust transparency" are key fulcrums for entering the youth market, and accordingly proposes development path recommendations for tea beverage brands oriented toward rural revitalization. Although the generalizability of the conclusions is constrained by sample limitations, the trend findings revealed and the analytical framework constructed in this study can still provide directional reference for subsequent larger-scale empirical research. Against the backdrop of the deepening rural re-

talization strategy, how to precisely connect high-quality resources from upstream tea-producing villages with downstream young consumer groups through branding is a research topic with both theoretical value and practical significance, and we look forward to more research continuing to advance in this direction in the future.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, Li Xiao; Data curation, Li Xiao, Jiao Zirui, Fan Jiaqi; Investigation, Li Xiao, Jiao Zirui, Fan Jiaqi; Resources, Li Xiao, Jiao Zirui; Methodology, Li Xiao; Visualization, Li Xiao; Writing - original draft, Li Xiao; Writing - review & editing, Li Xiao.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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