

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Trends in tea drinking

Tea is both the oldest and currently the most popular beverage in the world next to water (Trapasso, 1997). Although tea is only cultivated in a few countries, the custom of tea drinking spreads all over the world. There are more than 3000 different types of tea. China, as the original tea producing country, produces most types of rare tea and annually exports 18% of the entire world tea market (The Tea Council, 1999).

Tea shrubs are thought to have existed in China as early as five thousand years ago, and the cultivation of tea dates back two thousand years (Chow & Kramer, 1990). In past dynasties, Chinese people developed tea drinking into an art form: a tea ceremony involving a pattern of elaborate etiquette formed from ancient Chinese hospitality. The ritual involves the selection of tea, production of tea, process of brewing, selection of tea set, and the drinking environment. The tea ceremony is customarily performed in a broad range of social, religious, and business settings. It combines all three major ancient Chinese philosophies, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, while focusing on cultivating individual moral character (Liu, 1998).

The teahouse as a social setting played an important role in Chinese history. Even though there is no original documented record of when the first teahouse was established, teahouses historically have been, and currently are common throughout China, especially in the southern tea producing regions. In ancient times, the teahouse was the only non-religious place for public communication, recreation, and social activities. In large cities, some of the teahouses were the centers of non-government organizations and clubs, while others were used for transacting business (Chen, 1982).

The custom of tea drinking spread to many adjacent countries during the Tang Dynasty (618~907AD) and was introduced into Europe and America by the seventeenth-century. "Afternoon tea" in England was a special social activity in the early nineteenth century, becoming very popular and spreading to the entire western world. At the beginning of this century, Americans invented ice tea and tea bags. Tea drinking continues to grow rapidly in today's U.S. beverage market (Clausen, Miller, Mullins, Lisicki, 1997).

According to government data, the quantity of tea imported into the United States for consumption increased from 2,000,000 lb. in 1991 to 10,538,817 lb. in 1997 (U.S. Imports for consumption, 1998). Foodservice sales of tea have been growing at roughly 10% a year for the last several years. Many coffee shops and cafes also serve tea. Currently, selling quality teas in some of the coffee shops has become an important adaptation to meet the needs of the market (Clausen, Miller, Mullins, Lisicki, 1997).

The popularity of coffee shops in the United States has grown dramatically since the early 1990's. According to Restaurant Consulting Group's annual reported census data, the number of specialty gourmet coffee shops increased from 564 units in 1993 to 2,273 units in 1994 (Brumback, 1995). The growth and expansion of coffee shops may indicate a potential market for similar growth in specialty teahouses. Tea, besides having similar stimulate characteristics as coffee, has several health benefits. Many of these properties and benefits have been verified by modern research, and are gradually recognized by more and more people. Clearly, tea drinking fits the growing concern for nutrition and well-being in America.

The increase in tea consumption in the U.S. beverage market is related, in part at least, to a growing Asia population in the United States and a growing interest in Asia (Clausen, Miller, Mullins, Lisicki, 1997). Because of a continuous flow of immigration, the Asian population is growing rapidly in the United States. In addition, academic programs focusing on advances in technologies attract thousands of young people each year from all over the world to American universities to study and many of them are from Asian countries. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the foreign-born population increased from 22.5 million persons or 8.7 percent of total population in 1994 to 25.8 million persons or 9.7 percent of the total population in 1997. The Asian and Pacific Islander population grew from 7.4 million in 1994 to 10.1 million and represented 3.8 percent of the total population in 1997. Increasing international business and cultural interaction, along with these changing demographics, could account in large part for the growing demand for tea.

Tea is a special beverage, aspects of which are far more complex than coffee (Clausen, Mill, Mullins, Lisicki, 1997). There are thousands of types of tea and many more flavors. There are many ways to brew it and serve it, all giving different results in the taste and aroma.

Even with the growing interest in tea drinking in America, shops that specialize in teas are not typically available. However, the recent success of coffee shop chains could be an

indication for potential success for a teashop. An important factor in ensuring success for a business is determined by the store image. For a teashop to succeed, it would be appropriate to draw design inspiration from the culture that has the oldest tradition in producing and drinking tea: China.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to design a contemporary teashop deriving design inspirations from traditional Chinese culture and design.

Objective

The objectives of this study are the following:

- To determine factors in contemporary coffee shop planning and operation that might be applicable to designing a tea shop
- To investigate traditional Chinese teahouse design
- To select an existing site in a university town to adapt to a contemporary tea shop
- To develop planning for a contemporary tea shop through the preliminary design phase

Design Project:

Plans for a teashop will be developed for a selected site in a Mid-Atlantic university town. Design inspiration for this project will be based on traditional Chinese teahouses.

Justification for the study

According to a report by the National Restaurant Association (Eating Place Trends, 1998), the number of ethnic restaurants has increased steadily during the 1990s. Ethnic restaurants, such as Mexican and Chinese, exist throughout the country. The popularity of ethnic food could be due to continued growth in the immigrant population in the United States. People from other countries coming to America bring with them their cultural traditions and life styles that influence American society and potentially increase interest in different cultures.

Another growth industry in the United States during the past decade has been the coffee shop. This popular trend is apparent in most cities and towns, and especially in locations with colleges or universities.

Although referred to as coffee shops, most also sell tea along with a selection of some types of food. It is known that the consumption of tea in America has increased dramatically since 1990 (Simrang, 1997). Estimates of the amount of tea sold in these shops are not separated

from the total amount of tea sold in America. Growth in the tea market and interest in the health benefits of tea indicate the potential success for a shop specializing in tea.

The success of a retail shop is, in part, dependent upon visual images designed for exterior, interior, and furnishings. Immediate recognition is important also. A teashop image based on historical Chinese teahouse architecture is appropriate since tea is strongly associated with China. This product has been produced in, and exported from, China for centuries. Therefore, to plan and develop a teashop design for a site near a university campus, based on the coffee shop model, and taking design inspiration from the traditional Chinese teahouse, should result in success.