

**TEA**  
INTERACTION DESIGN



# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION  
COLLECTIONS  
RESEARCH  
SCREENING SURVEY

1  
2  
5

FIELD WORK I

LITERATURE REVIEW

OBJECT STUDY

FIELD WORK II

Concepts

11





# INTRODUCTION

The design problem we are exploring is around heritage and interaction design. Our team started with oversea Chinese and their cultural heritage. During our design research, we found it interesting that almost all of the Chinese people we spoke to brought one or more kinds of tea with them when they moved abroad. Why did they do this even though not all of them are tea lovers? How have their drinking habits changed after moving abroad? What difficulties do they have when they want to enjoy a Chinese tea ceremony in America? After a series of design research our design concepts are around the topic of "Chinese Tea and Tea Ceremony". So what could we do, as interaction designers, to help protect and develop Chinese tea culture with design?



# Ripple Effect Tea Table

This table combines the eastern ritual and social relationships. Every time people place the cup on the table, the ripples will speed up on the surface of the body.[3]





# ONE Teakettle

The ONE Teakettle has an intuitive magnetic trivet, which will attach to the base only when the kettle is hot. Users can bring it directly to the table for serving.[4]

# Sorapot

Sorapot is a well designed tea-pot. "Its architectural shape and simple functionality bring tea's quiet beauty into sharp focus." [5]



In order to re-frame our design problem and find people who could be our subjects to study, we published our first screening survey to 17 overseas Chinese who are living in America. Moreover, we asked about their opinion about Chinese culture. Most of them strongly agree that overseas Chinese should learn about Chinese history and culture. In conducting this research, we gained a general sense of which direction we should go through this survey.



Do you agree that overseas Chinese should learn about Chinese history and culture?

After the screening survey, we found seven available people and did the first fieldwork, during which we mainly observed these people talking about their collections they brought with them when moving to America. Interestingly, we found all of these seven subjects had Chinese tea in their place of residence and we learned that they did so because they are a tea lovers or they treat tea as the symbol of Chinese culture, which makes tea a perfect present.



After this fieldwork, our team narrowed down our design space to Chinese tea, an important element in Chinese culture. We conducted literary research, which was mainly centered on an article from International Journal of Design about a case study of relationship between tea culture and social interaction design[1]. In this article, it puts forward the meaning of tea activity in Taiwan. Drinking tea for Chinese is not only for physiological needs, but also emotional and social needs. However, the way to make tea, and have tea, is changing with all the tectonic shift in today's digital word. We should think about using interaction design to develop this traditional culture.





We also did an object study, which was all about tea. We asked one subject who is a tea lover to do a routine interaction with tea. We kept digital imagery documentary and figured out some design qualities of tea: drinkable, regional, salutary, carrier of Chinese culture, spiritual practice and value.

Then we did the second round of fieldwork. We interviewed three people talking about tea and drinking tea in America using the method of object probes. At the same time we did a second survey, which is specifically focused on Chinese tea for overseas Chinese. Data and stories we obtained from these gave us direct inspiration, which will be explained in the concept section in detail.





“ “

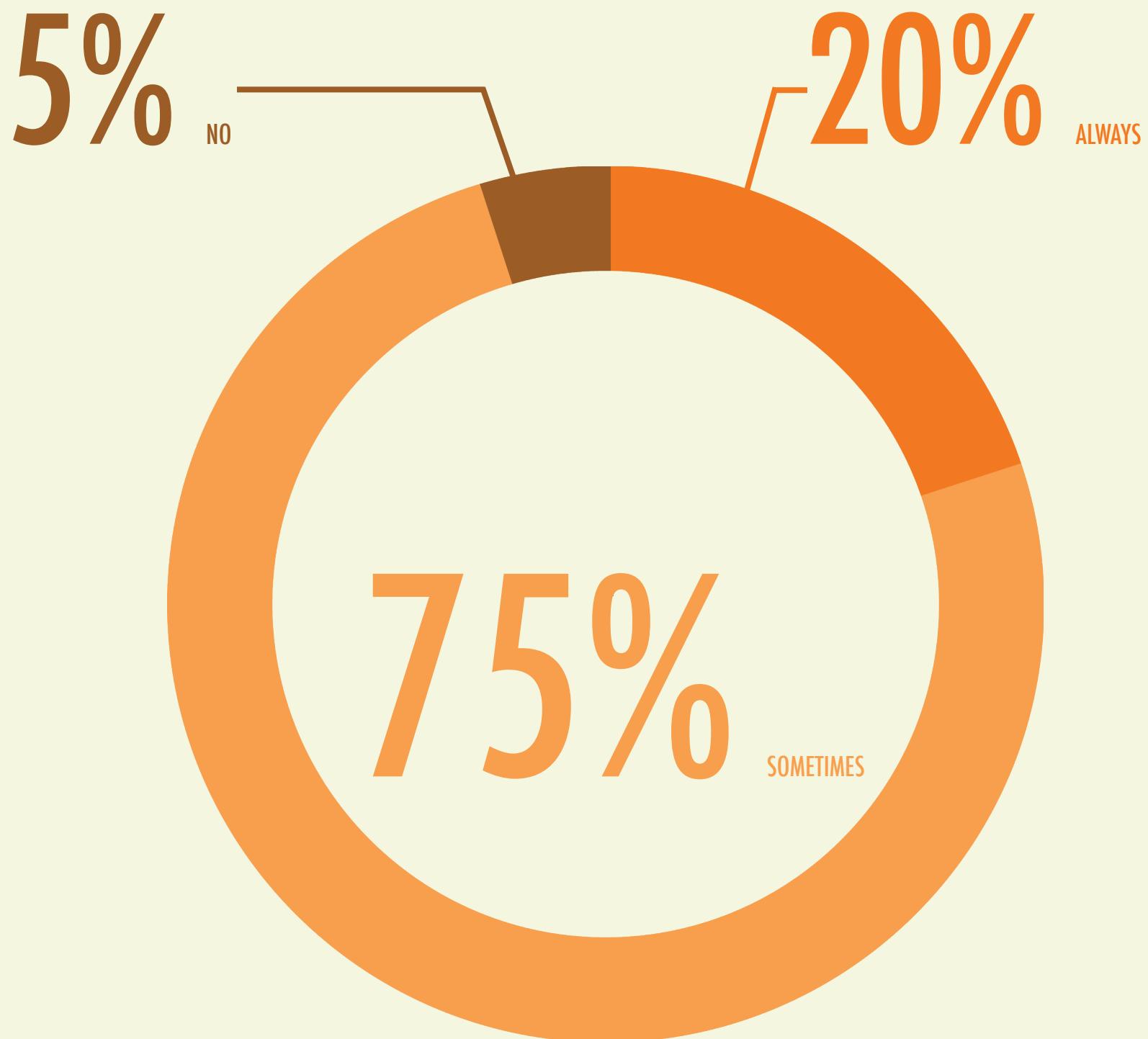
There are many kinds of tea, I can't tell... but I know they are healthy, they can help to remove extra oil in the body and make people healthy.

” ”

“ “

My parents drink whatever tea we have at home.

” ”

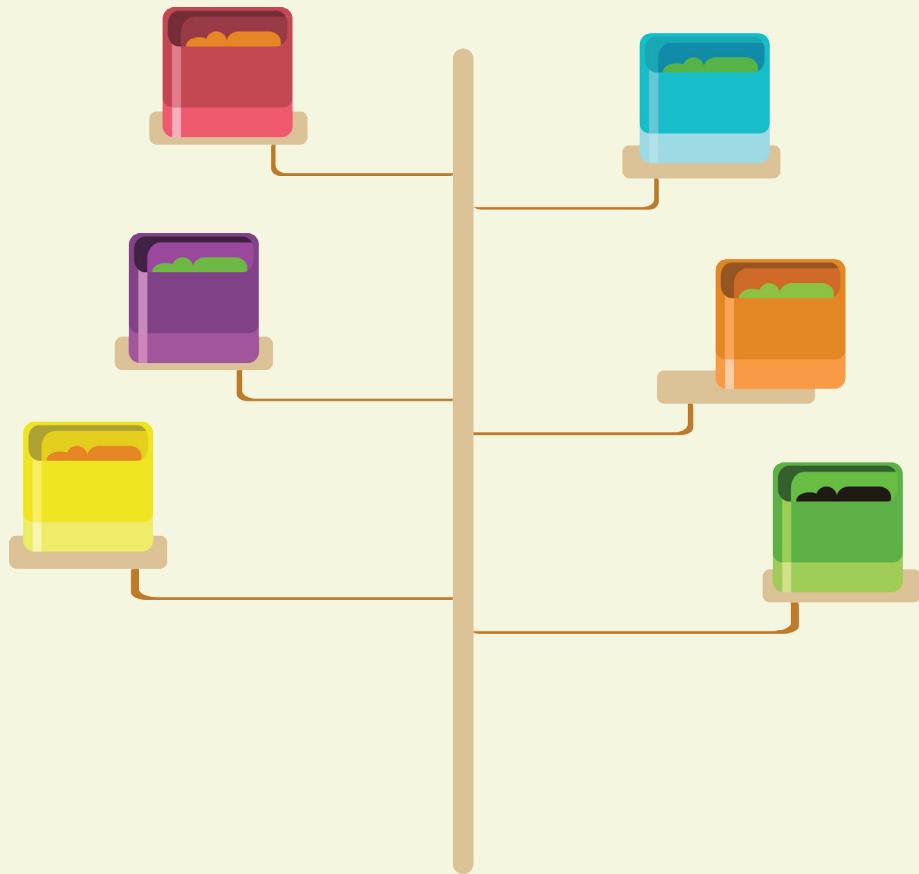


Could you tell the differences among various kinds of tea?

- There are different kinds of tea, the best tea for drinking changes with specific solar term and weather.
- Not all people can tell the differences among various kinds of tea.
- Drinking tea is good for people to keep healthy.

# Tea Recommendation Tree

This recommendation tree can provide recommendations according to the solar term, weather, etc. A person can store different kinds of tea on the tree, and when they want to get some, they can get a recommendation. For example, when they rotate the tea tree, the system starts to calculate the best tea to drink according to the specific solar term and weather. The recommended tea will stop in front of the person and the branch will illuminate.



“ “

I know it's more healthy than coke, but coke is more convenient.

” ”

“ “

I only drink tea made by the other people, I could find tea in the restaurants when I was in China, but here, there is only water, cold water.

” ”



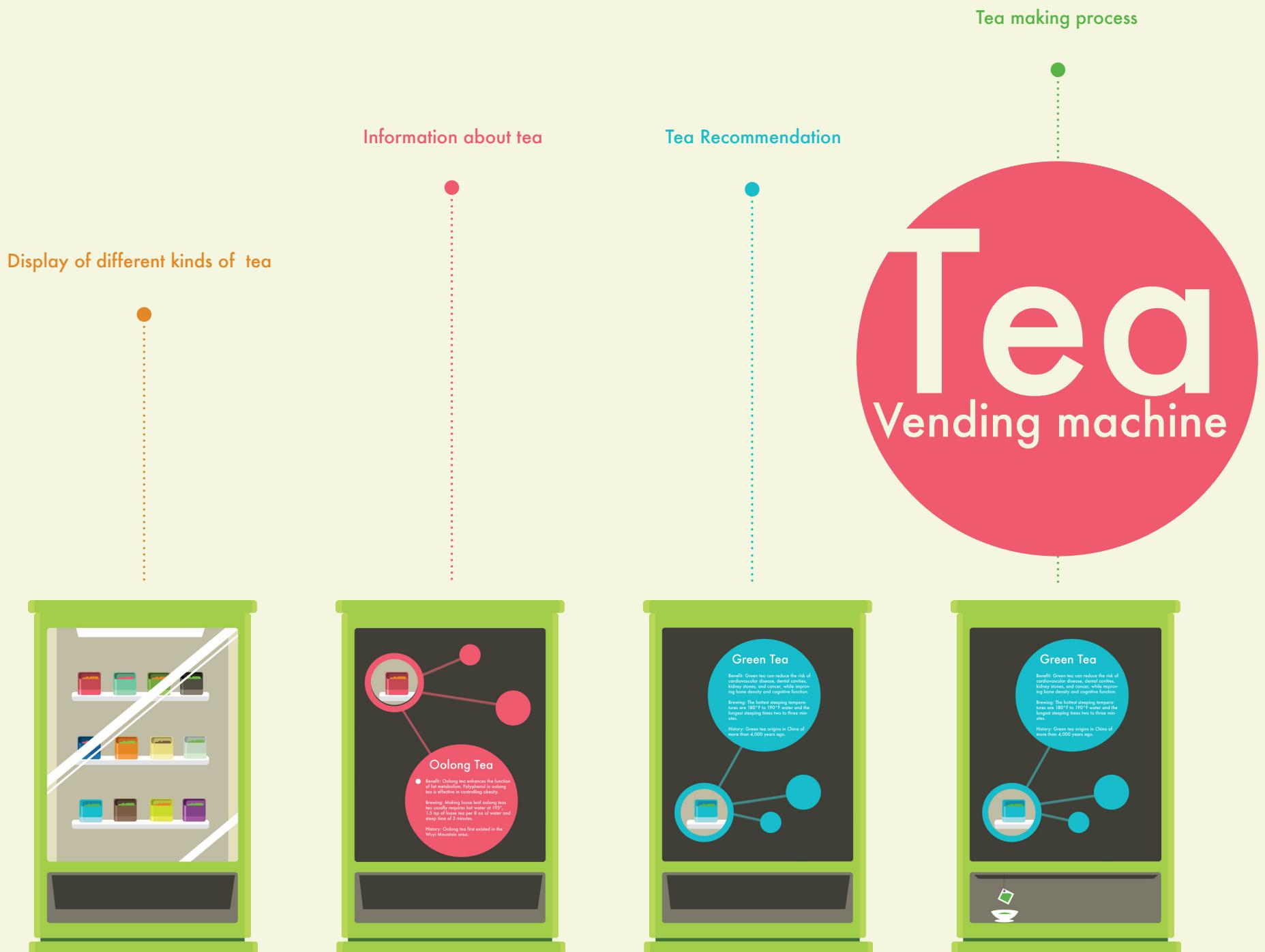
**100%**

YES

Do you agree that drinking tea could help people keep healthy?

- Time and hot water are the reasons why overseas Chinese choose coke or other drinks, although all of them know tea is healthier.
- Overseas Chinese find that it is hard to find good quality Chinese tea.

This vending machine is for selling different kinds of teas. The outside surface of the vending machine is a big touch screen. There are two channels to obtain the tea. The first is touching the specific tea on the screen, which will trigger an introduction of this tea showing on the screen. The second channel is to push a “what is best for today” button on the screen. The system can select the best tea to drink according to the specific solar term and whether, then people will get the explanation on the screen and get the tea. Moreover, the tea will be made before coming out of the machine, so the customer does not need to worry about the time it takes to make tea, they just enjoy it. The process of waiting for the tea would be fine and magic.



“ “

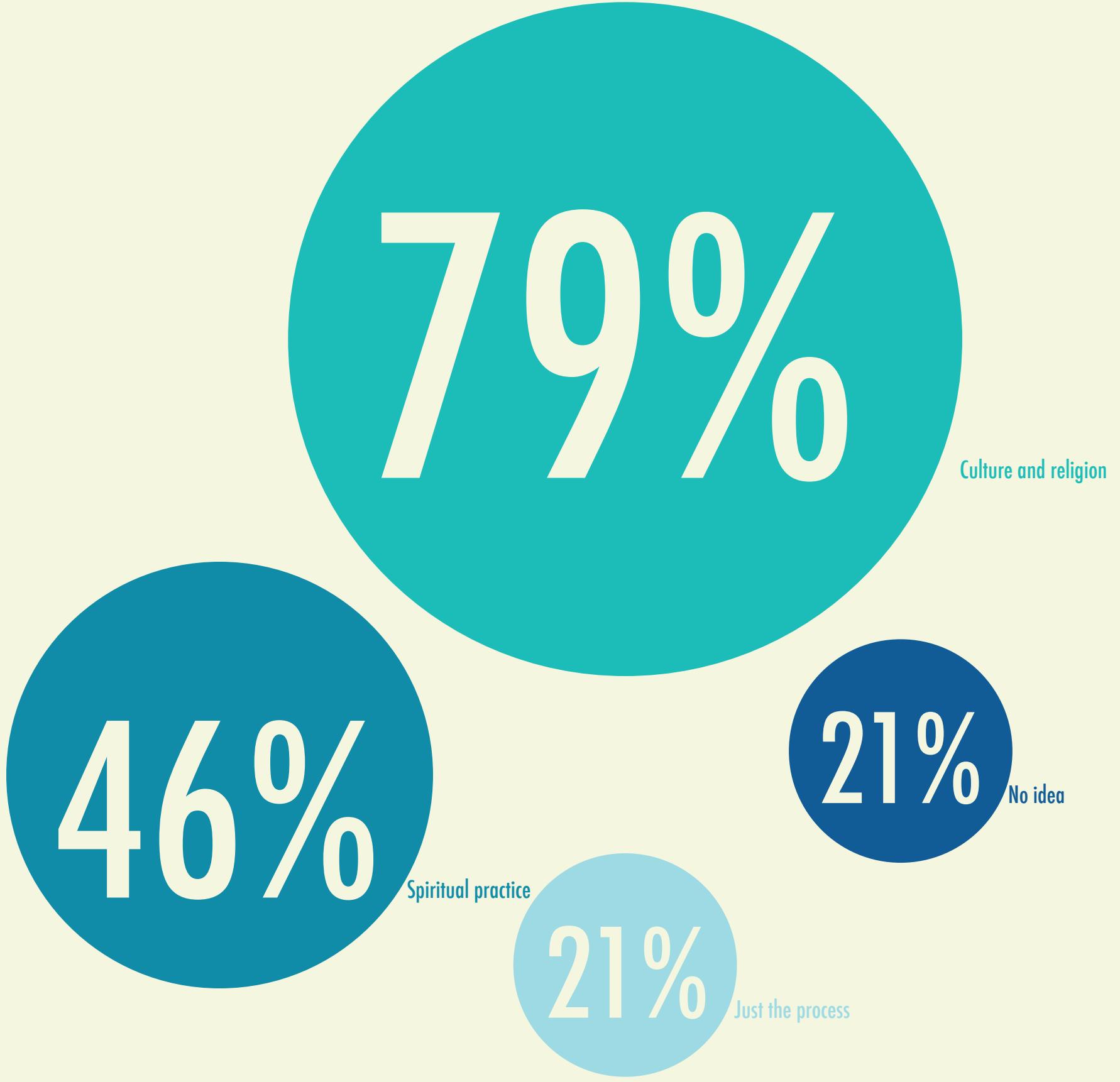
It (tea ceremony) is a kind  
of social activity, but I don't  
know how to do it.

‘ ’

“ “

The process is important,  
without it it can't be called  
tea.

‘ ’



What do you think about "Tea ceremony"?

**Tea ceremony is a kind of social activity.**

- Few people know how to make tea following the right tea ceremony process.
- People enjoy the mood during the process of making tea and drinking tea.



# Interactive Tea Tray

This Interactive tea tray is a digital interactive table that instructs people on how to do a Chinese tea ceremony. People can learn and practice how to have a Chinese tea ceremonies with the interactive instructions shown on the tea tray. The tea tray will have animation instructions on the surface next to the items to be operated on, signifying that item. Different animations stand for different actions, people can read the legend on the tea tray and follow the animation, then they will learn the steps to have a tea ceremony.



“ “

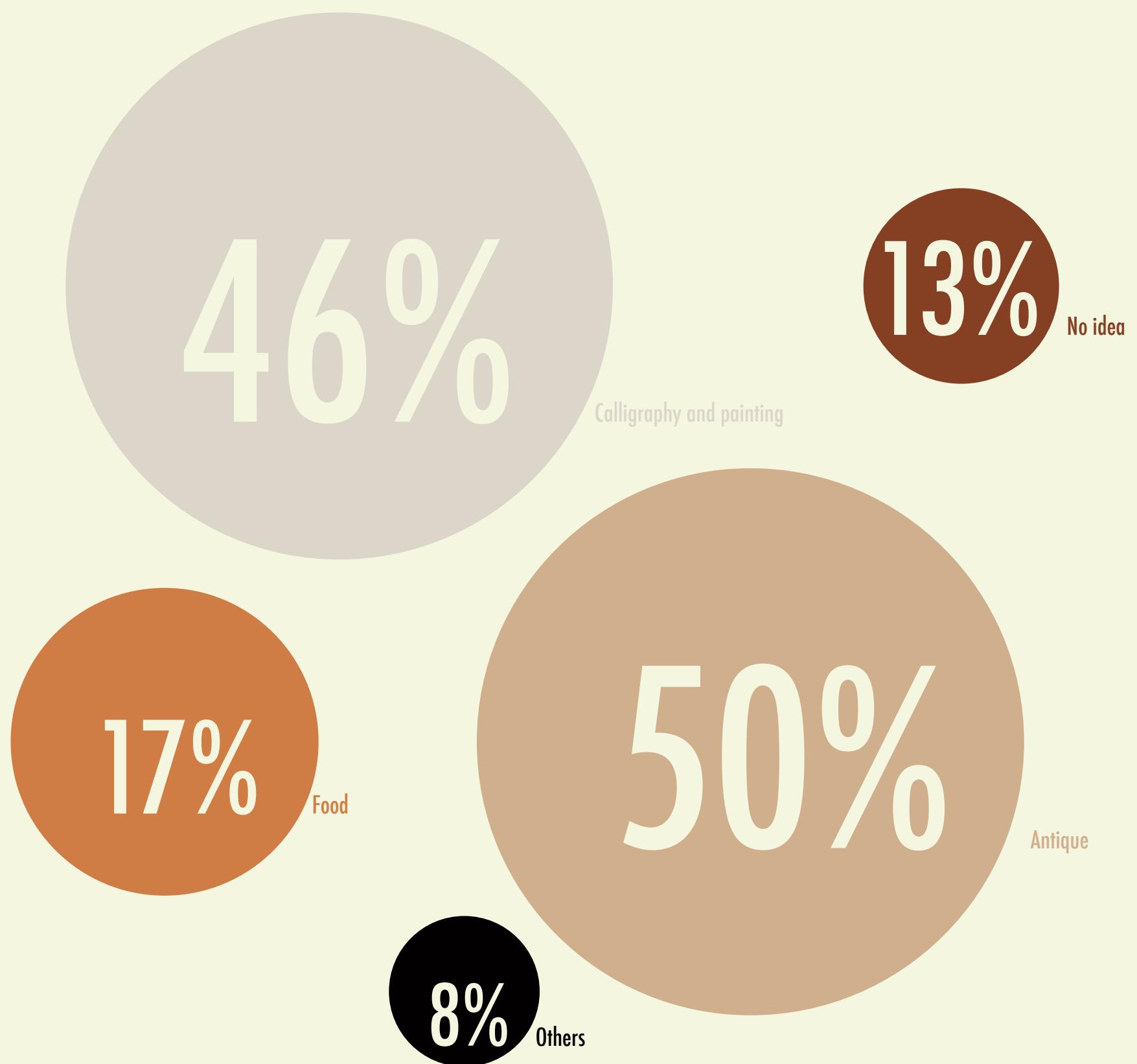
The environment isn't really suited to enjoy tea.

” ”

“ “

I saw them using specific tea set to make tea, they are matching.

” ”



What collection do you think is the most similar one with collection of tea and tea set?

- People enjoy the mood during the process of making tea and drinking tea.
- People treat collections of tea the same as a collection of calligraphy or painting.
- Chinese tea is a sign of traditional Chinese culture. Being together with other kinds of traditional Chinese culture items may enhance the meaning and mood.



Yellow Tea

Green Tea

Flower Tea

Black Tea

This intuitive cup can change its appearance by reacting with different kinds of teas. The poetry and the traditional Chinese painting on the surface will change to match the tea type. Four examples on this page, they are yellow tea, green tea, flower tea and black tea respectively.

Intuitive  
**Cup**

“ “

I can remember a lot of things about it  
(having tea with family members).

” ”

“ “

When I try to recall the memory when I had tea with my parents in China, I just want to cry.

” ”



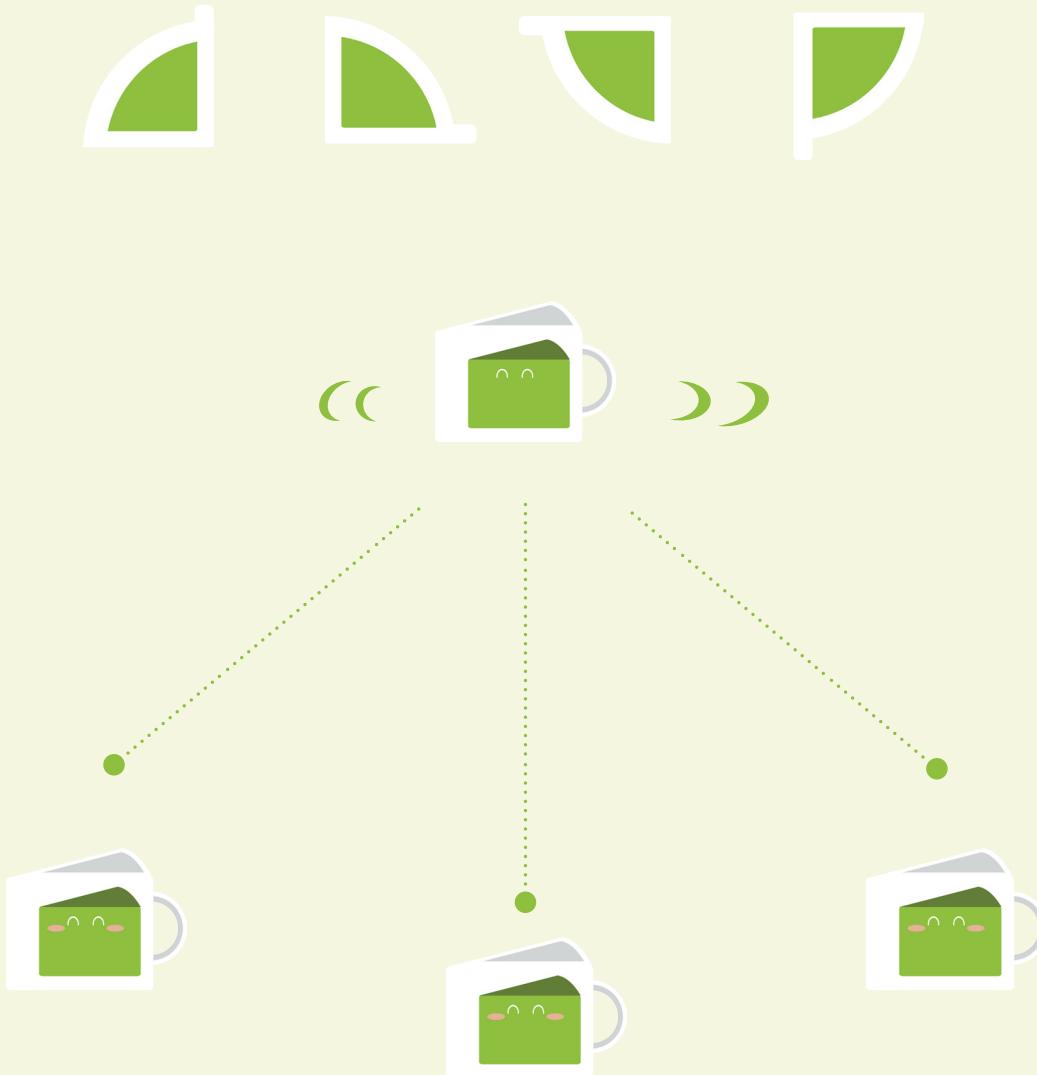
where did you usually have tea?

- Drinking tea is a kind of social activity happening among family members or friends.
- Overseas Chinese miss family members, friends or partners who are in China.
- People have memories and emotions towards drinking tea.



## Correlated tea set

This correlated tea set consists of several cups (we present four in the prototype). Each cup has a different "face" image on the arc side and two "hand" images on the flat sides. When put together, all the flat sides will adjoin together, which means hand in hand. And the arc sides being together will make the tea set a bigger whole round. When separated, these four cups will also be correlated by digital connection. For example, if one family member brings one of the cups with him and moves abroad, when using the cup makes him recalling the memory, he can tap on the "hands" on the cup. All the other cups will react to this action by warming up on the surface and turning red on the "faces". People who have the other cups can read the "missing you" message and answer back by tapping the cups.



# References

[1]

Ko-Hsun Huang, Yi-Shin Deng. Social Interaction Design in Cultural Context: A Case Study of a Traditional Social Activity. Internatinal Journal of Design, 2008, Vol2, No2

[2]

Chinese Teas 101

<http://chineseteas101.com/teaclass.htm>

[3]

Ripple Effect Tea Table

<http://www.hannaseo.com/index.php?/ripple-effect-tea-table/>

[4]

ONE Teakettle

<http://www.designswan.com/archives/great-design-from-tea-off-competition.html>

[5]

Sorapot

<http://joeyroth.com/sorapot/>



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