

## **Capitalising On The Taste Of India**

Teabox sources their teas from the green hills of Assam, Darjeeling and the Nilgiris. Through their ground breaking cold chain process, it retains the freshness, delivering the highest quality loose leaf teas.

Teabox is an ecommerce company based in India that offers consumers globally a variety of 300 of the best loose leaf teas, chosen for their quality and sourced from over 150 estates across India and Nepal. With a new product, TeaPac, individually packaged tea bags sealed at the source, the company has introduced an innovative approach of packaging, 'natural nitrogen flush', in the beverage market, keeping moisture, heat, oxygen and light out.

Talking about the new innovation in tea in terms of taste and technology, Dugar feels, "TeaPac is a tea bag using natural nitrogen flush packaging technology that seals in the freshness of the tea. The TeaPac is made using a food-grade nylon pyramid-shape bag. Once filled with a single serving of our freshest tea, the bag is encased in a high-quality laminated pouch. The pouch is then flushed with natural Nitrogen to lock in the freshness of the tea and sealed. Also, we have innovated Tea Finder which is a palate based engine which recommends teas to customers based on their preferences.

It all started after high school, when Kaushal Dugar went on to win a scholarship to study Business at the Singapore Management University. "At that time, the Indian economy was booming, and I decided to return back to India to explore my options here. I came back to Siliguri and decided to go work for my elder brother who runs a tea export business. Working there showed me another side to the business from what I had seen with my father – I saw the infrastructure that was being used to take the teas from gardens to the consumer and was surprised at how dated it was. And in these challenges, I saw a great opportunity for change. My experiences enabled me to wriggle free of the constricting assumptions of the industry insider. It also enabled me to import ideas and practices from other industries and cultures and apply them to every aspect of strategy - including product development, organisation and marketing. These skill sets, in combination with my first-hand experience with tea industry (given my family's background), were the driving forces behind setting up Teabox. Our business is only five years old," he says.

Talking about the USP, Dugar highlights on the quality and freshness of the tea. "We visit the tea gardens in Darjeeling, Assam, the Nilgiri, Kangra, Sikkim and now even Nepal, taste and select the teas to vacuum pack to retain freshness."

However, tea as a category has been neglected for years. The major players in category have generally favored volume over quality, pursued incremental improvements in features, ignored the emotional aspects of their products and brands. The industry has, on the whole been a little resistant to change, unlike coffee industry which has constantly evolved.

Ratan Tata invested an undisclosed amount in Teabox in 2016 and has been backed by Singapore-based JAFCO Asia, Accel Partners, Keystone Group LP and Dragoneer Investment Group. Dugar remembers, "One of the investors, Robert Bass of Keystone Group LP, first discovered Teabox as a tea drinker. He is a devout tea drinker and he loved the product so much that he went on to participate in this round of investment. We also had another customer-turned investor, Cameron Jones who invested in Teabox. There couldn't have been a bigger testament to the quality of our product."

Building a global premium consumer brand on [www.teabox.com](http://www.teabox.com), the firm is actively working on a multi-channel approach to make it more accessible.