

TEA & COFFEE

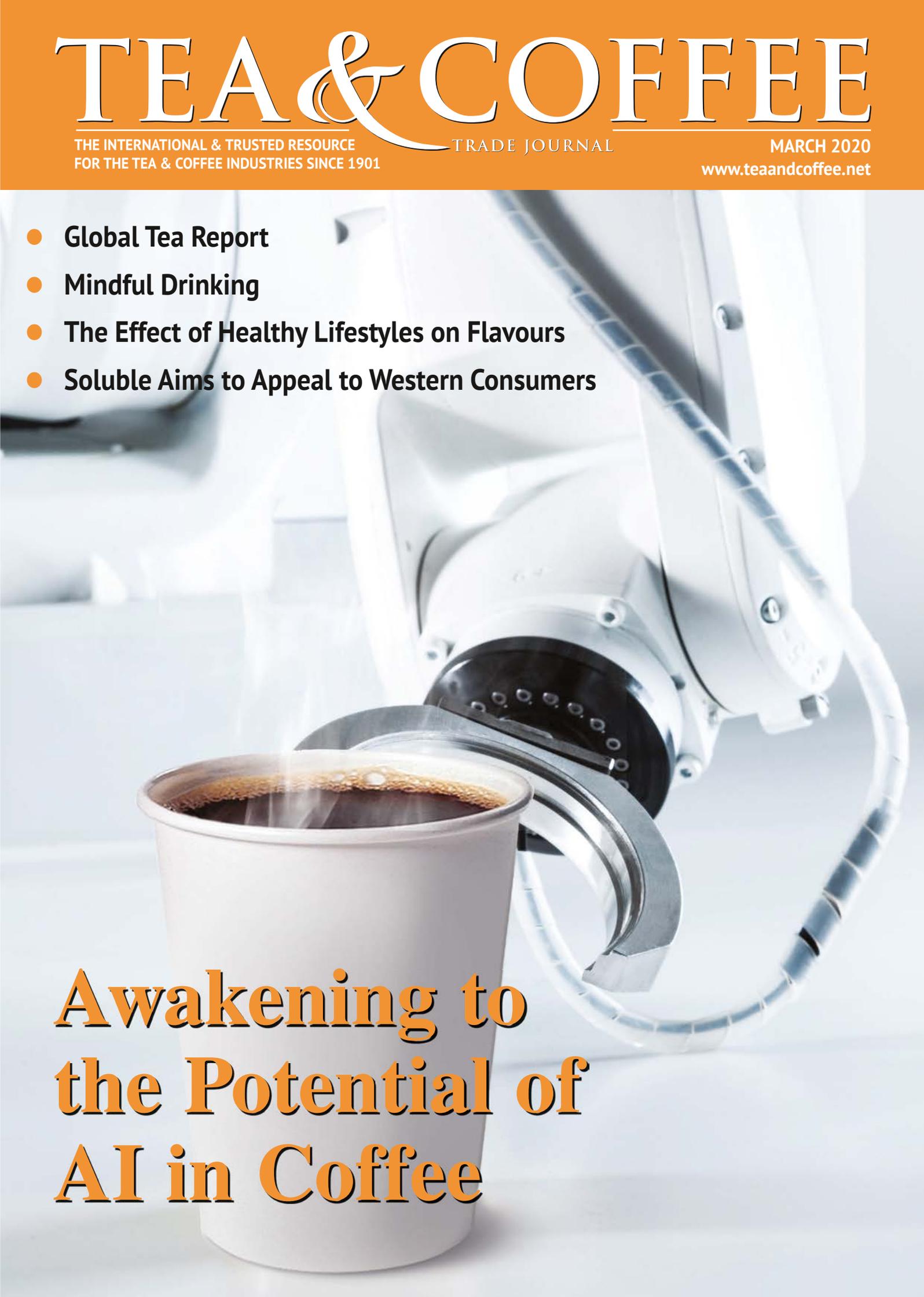
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A close-up photograph of a white robotic arm pouring dark coffee into a white cup. The arm is positioned above the cup, and the coffee is being dispensed from a nozzle. The background is a light, neutral color, possibly a kitchen counter or a clean surface. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern, emphasizing the integration of technology in coffee preparation.

**Awakening to
the Potential of
AI in Coffee**

Health Awareness & the Impact on Flavour

Growing awareness of health issues such as obesity and diabetes means that many consumers are seeking healthier, all-natural products that are low in sugar and calories. Through smart devices, consumers can quickly learn more than they ever have about products. From origin to ingredient details, consumers can make smarter choices to “live better.” Offering products with attributes such as preservative free, organic, non-GMO and free-from will attract health-conscious consumers and add to the product’s authenticity (GlobalData *Top Growth Opportunities Hot Drinks in the US Report*, 2019).

Consumers demand more from their beverages. Functional additives can help individuals meet nutritional targets and are welcomed by consumers to help reach their nutritional goals. According to a new report from *Nation’s Restaurant News* and S&D Coffee and Tea, *The Future of Beverages: 2020 Trend Forecast*, flavour is the top attribute consumers look for in functional beverages, followed by natural ingredients, low calorie drinks and energy. Coffee has been a natural source of energy for decades; however, consumers are also interested in ways to relax. We know that CBD (cannabidiol) is known for helping with relaxation, pain reduction and treating anxiety which can appeal to a wide age range. Once the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) of the United States approves CBD for consumption in food and beverage, there will be a massive release of new products containing CBD in the market, including coffee and tea as debuted at BevNET Live Winter 2019 Show in Santa Monica, California.

Adaptogens are non-toxic plants that reportedly help the body resist stressors and improve energy.

Consumers are making smarter choices in their quest to live healthier lifestyles. But although they are actively searching for better-for-you ingredients and products, flavour remains the leading attribute consumers look for in functional beverages.

By Janie Page

In the meantime, there has been an increased interest in botanicals, plant-based milks and adaptogens. Adaptogens are non-toxic plants like holy basil, mushrooms, maca, ginseng, licorice, and gotu kola, that are known to help the body resist stressors, improve energy, and promote general well-being. These natural herbs are also known to benefit one’s immune system. Many emerging brands are featuring different creative uses of adaptogens; for example, Pure Wild’s Blueberry Holy Basil Collagen Juice, Shroomi’s Adaptogen Shots and Four Sigmatic Adaptogen Coffee. Consumers associate botanicals with a natural approach to wellness. With wellness being a concern for consumers, botanical flavours like rose, elderflower and honeysuckle flavours have wide ranging applications to enhance the taste and complexity of beverage products.

Last year, Wildcrafter Botanicals launched a 100 percent Organic Fair Trade certified coffee infused with “superherbs” that have been tested for over 30 herbicides and pesticides. Wildcrafter Immune Shield Coffee is infused with elderberry and adaptogens such as turmeric, astragalus root and reishi mushroom blend.

Starbucks is responding to all these trends with its January 2020 launch of Starbucks Coffee with Essential Vitamins, Starbucks Coffee with Golden Turmeric and Starbucks Coffee with 2X the Caffeine. The company recently announced plans to expand plant-based options and migrate toward a more environmentally friendly menu.

In an interview with *Bloomberg News*, Kevin Johnson, CEO of Starbucks Corporation, said, “Alternative milks will be a big part of the solution.” Starbucks currently offers dairy



alternatives including soy, coconut and almond milk.

Impact on Flavour

Brands, manufacturers and especially flavourists are challenged to create great tasting, quality formulations that meet consumers' needs and desires for healthier beverages. Fortifying products with vitamins, spices, plants, and other supplements can be challenging to flavour profiles. According to Nick Viriyasiri, flavour scientist at Beck Flavors, "Adding ingredients such as vitamins and proteins can cause bitter, earthy, mineral, and grassy off notes. However, flavours like citrus, ginger, and honey can complement or enhance the taste, but it's really a work of science."

And while adding various healthy supplements is challenging enough, simultaneously lowering sugar and caloric content is quite a feat. "When you take away the fat or calories it is challenging to get that full body flavour perception. For example, if you are looking for something sugary like a cotton candy without the sugar it can be difficult," said Viriyasiri.

It's an exciting time in beverages. There are endless combinations of flavours and additives like never before, but consumers will ultimately decide the best-tasting products. ☕



Janie Page is the senior director of marketing for Beck Flavors Inc, a custom flavour house that delivers innovative flavour solutions for the food and beverage industry. She brings to her role over 18 years of experience in the foodservice, retail and consumer packaged goods industries. With her certification as a Q-Grader by the Coffee Quality Institute, Page brings together insights, innovation and technical expertise.

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