

Cherise sees potential in tea vending biz, sets up contactless machines

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These units come enabled with 4G sim cards, IOT, and are connected to all pay wallets

Sensing a huge potential in the tea vending business, Pune-based Cherise India Pvt Ltd has begun setting up contactless vending machines enabled with Internet of Things (IOT) and Android technologies in six cities across the country. The special feature of these vending machines is that they are connected to a 4G sim card that communicates with a cloud server.

‘No human contact’

“There is no human contact in the functioning of our tea or other beverage vending machines. They are connected to all ATMs and pay wallets with RFID cards in the machines. They have a cutting edge technology that has found a resolution to all problems plaguing vending machines,” says Parimal Shah, Founder and CEO, Cherise India Pvt Ltd.

The vending machines report every cup of tea that is consumed by a user, uses an innovative form of pest repellent and has self-fumigation facilities besides sensors. “We have come up with a disruptive vending technology. It is aimed at changing the surprise belief in India that vending machines are unhygienic,” says the Cherise founder, a third generation tea farmer.

Cherise has a large plant to manufacture large varieties of tea - including multi-herbal tea, coffee, herbal drinks and soups that are personally checked by Shah, who is a master tea sommelier and coffee sensor analyst.

‘Farm-to-cup ecosystem’

Terming his business as “farm-to-cup ecosystem”, he says his company procures all raw materials and formulates its own blends in pre-mixes, including special coffee and tea, and dispenses through vending machines. It also does its own branding and marketing.

“Ours is a printer-catridge model. We manufacture our own beverage. We buy from farms, process our blends, value-add, package and brand the products. We sell across all ecosystems, including online,” said Shah, whose father Kalpesh M Shah heads one of the oldest tea companies, MK Jokai Agri Plantations.

Cherise was set up in 2019 and began its foray with the construction of its factory at Pune, along with a testing laboratory and software. The factory was inaugurated in January last year and since then, Cherise has been setting up 25-30 vending machines every month across the country.

Expanding operations

“Till March 31 this year, we had set up 282 vending machines. We are now present in Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Goa and Hyderabad. By November this year, we will expand our operations to Delhi, the National Capital Region, East India and other States,” said Shah, who has vast experience in tasting, procurement, blending, branding, value adding, and retail distribution of teas, coffee and herbs.

Shah got the idea to float the state-of-the-art vending machines after his visits abroad where he saw how vending machines were being put to optimal use in dispensing beverages such as tea and coffee. “I found a huge gap in the market for such products. This when I decided to come with our own production and brand to guarantee quality. We control the full ecosystem and that’s why we term this as a farm-to-cup ecosystem,” he said.

The Indian tea industry has a lot of potential with demand for tea increasing annually. “Demand for tea during the Covid pandemic increased. Also, people have begun to consume hot beverages and a good demand is coming up on that front,” Shah said.

“We don’t see serious impediments to the demand for tea. Quality is a challenge and weather also has to support it,” he said, adding that Cherise would focus on its existing technology to focus on its core business. “The future of the tea industry is good. It is always a good business with good margins,” he added.

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