

1 **Please cite this article as:**

2 Yi Jiang, Yan Huang, Yuanzhi Wu, & Lei Wang. (2022). Drinking tea improves the  
3 convergent creativity performance. *Food Quality and Preference*.

4 <https://authors.elsevier.com/a/1deDo3O579cHMf>, or

5 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2021.104360>

6

7 **Drinking tea improves convergent creativity performance**

8

9

Abstract

10 Tea consumption has been extensively shown to be closely related to physical  
11 health and cognitive abilities. However, there are no definite conclusions on the  
12 relationship between tea consumption and convergent thinking. Convergent thinking  
13 requires top-down cognitive processing, which focuses on searching for an appropriate  
14 idea based on well-defined criteria. It is a necessary part of the creative process and is  
15 inextricably linked to divergent thinking that requires people to search for many  
16 different ideas with less defined criteria within a wider search span. It has been found  
17 that tea consumption is beneficial to divergent thinking in creativity. Given that  
18 convergent thinking is related to divergent thinking, we hypothesized that drinking tea  
19 may also promote convergent thinking. This research was to investigate the enhancing  
20 effects of tea on convergent thinking and test its possible mediating mechanism (i.e.,  
21 the role of positive emotions) and marginal conditions (e.g., the moderating roles of  
22 intelligence and tea preference). In Experiment 1, participants completed the Remote  
23 Association Test (RAT) which requires the solver to create a meaningful link (word  
24 association) that mediates three seemingly unrelated cues (e.g., Same–Tennis–Head is  
25 mediated by Match) after drinking tea or water. The results showed that the type of  
26 drinks and tea consumption habits had a significant interaction effect on RAT scores.

1 The participants who drank tea (v.s. water) and had the habit of drinking tea performed  
2 best in the RAT. A "split half effect" was found. That is, participants' performance in  
3 different groups was significantly different in the second half of the RAT, suggesting  
4 that drinking tea leads to persistent problem-solving convergent thinking. Experiment  
5 2 aimed to replicate the findings in Experiment 1 using a different convergent thinking  
6 task, namely, riddle tasks, where participants needed to solve riddles with different  
7 levels of difficulty. The results revealed that performance in the tea group on the  
8 difficult tasks was significantly higher than that in the water group; after controlling for  
9 knowledge level and intelligence, the differences in the performance in the medium-  
10 and high-difficulty riddle tasks between the two groups were significant. Although no  
11 experiments found a mediating effect of positive emotions, Experiment 2 showed that  
12 the participants in the tea group were happier and more interested in the task than those  
13 in the water group. To conclude, the positive effects of tea drinking on convergent  
14 thinking was demonstrated, and the moderating effects of knowledge level, intelligence,  
15 and tea drinking habits were elaborated. The results have important practical  
16 significance for those who are engaged in creative work or those who are prone to  
17 fatigue.

18

19 **Keywords:** Tea Drinking; Convergent Thinking; Creativity Performance; Tea  
20 Consumption; "Split half effect"

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1 **1. Introduction**

2 Tea consumption ranks second in the world, only to water consumption (Hodgson  
3 & Croft, 2010). Many studies have explored the functional effects of tea. It has been  
4 found that drinking tea is good for physical health (Ruxton, Phillips, & Bond, 2015;  
5 Shen & Chyu, 2016; Hayat, Iqbal, Malik, Bilal, & Mushtaq, 2015), cognition (Einöther  
6 & Martens, 2013; Dietz & Dekker, 2017; Kuriyama et al., 2006), and emotion (Einöther  
7 & Martens, 2013; Einöther, Rowson, Ramaekers, & Giesbrecht, 2016).

8 Recently, research on the cognitive impact of tea drinking has focused on creativity.  
9 Convergent creativity and divergent creativity involve different cognitive processes.  
10 Convergent creativity requires top-down cognitive processing, which focuses on  
11 searching for an appropriate idea based on well-defined criteria, while divergent  
12 creativity involves less top-down processing, so people can search for many different  
13 ideas with less defined criteria within a wider search span. It has been found that tea  
14 improves divergent thinking in creative tasks, e.g., the Remote Association Test (RAT,  
15 Huang et al., 2018). However, few empirical studies have investigated the effect of tea  
16 drinking on convergent thinking (Einöther et al., 2015). Since convergent thinking is  
17 an essential human activity (Abu-Akel, Webb, de Montpellier, Von Bentivegni,  
18 Luechinger, Ishii, & Mohr, 2020; Shettar & Tewari, 2020), it is worth discovering  
19 methods that could improve convergent thinking. The current research will address this  
20 issue. We will first review the literature and describe our research proposal.

21 *1.1 Tea and primary cognitive processing*

22 Empirical studies on tea consumption and cognition mainly focus on tea and low-  
23 level cognitive processes, namely, attention or alertness level. To date, some studies  
24 have specifically explored the effect of black tea on attention performance (Einöther

1 and Martens, 2013). Hindmarch, Quinlan, Moore, and Parkin (1998) compared the  
2 effects of coffee, water, and tea with and without caffeine in the critical flicker fusion  
3 (CFF) task (an objective means of measuring subjects' ability to distinguish discrete  
4 sensory data) and the line analog rating scale (LARS). In the CFF task, subjects are  
5 required to discriminate flicker fusion in a set of four light-emitting diodes held in  
6 foveal fixation at 1 m. With LARS, subjective ratings of treatment effects are obtained  
7 from a series of 100-mm line analog rating scales, where attention is assessed by  
8 alertness items. The results showed that caffeinated beverages improved task  
9 performance and self-reported alertness, and cognitive performance decreased more  
10 slowly over time than performance did with noncaffeinated beverages. Moreover, the  
11 study found that tea's attention benefits could not be entirely attributed to caffeine and  
12 that other components (e.g., flavonoids, theanine) of tea could also contribute to  
13 cognitive benefits. The study showed that subjects who drank caffeinated tea had a  
14 significantly greater CFF threshold than those who drank caffeinated water (caffeine  
15 concentrations were equal). The study provided preliminary evidence for the beneficial  
16 effects of tea on attention-related performance. In their subsequent study, the main  
17 effects of 37.5 and 75 mg caffeine in the CFF and LARS tasks, respectively, were  
18 successfully replicated (Hindmarch et al., 2000).

19 A recent study (Bruin, Rowson, Buren, Rycroft, & Owen, 2011) used double-blind  
20 placebo-controlled crossover designs and more complex attention tasks to further  
21 investigate these effects. Again, accuracy in the attention-switching task was improved  
22 after drinking black tea, and the participants in the tea group reported higher levels of

1 alertness than those in the placebo group.

2 It can be concluded from the above studies that drinking tea can improve attention  
3 and self-reported alertness. Studies on caffeine and the combination of theanine and  
4 caffeine further support these conclusions (Giesbrecht, Rycroft, Rowson, & De Bruin,  
5 2010; Kelly, Gomez-Ramirez, Montesi, & Foxe, 2008).

### 6 *1.2 Tea and cognitive thinking in creativity*

7 A few studies have investigated the relationship between tea consumption and  
8 creative thinking as an advanced comprehensive cognitive process. The work of  
9 Einöther et al. (2015) and Huang et al. (2018) provided preliminary evidence for the  
10 main effect of tea on divergent thinking in creative tasks. In particular, Huang et al.  
11 (2018) showed a "split half effect"; that is, the enhancing effects of tea drinking on task  
12 performance did not appear until the second half of the task. It is possible that tea also  
13 causes improvements in endurance. As the task goes on, the tea starts to take effect to  
14 resist the decrease of performance. This study showed that tea drinking can significantly  
15 help maintain and improve performance in the second half of cognitive tasks, a  
16 phenomenon called "split-half effect". This means that the enhancing effects of tea on  
17 convergent creative performance lies in its ability to maintain tenacity and persistence.  
18 This may also be because the more difficult the task is, the more helpful the tea drinking  
19 is, which is consistent with previous research findings (Einöther et al., 2015).

20 Contrary to divergent thinking, convergent thinking focuses on producing a single,  
21 comprehensive answer to a question, which usually means the process of providing a  
22 "correct" answer to a standard question (Cropley, 2006). Convergent thinking is a  
23 necessary part of the creative process and is inextricably linked to divergent thinking.  
24 Given that tea drinking is beneficial to divergent thinking in creativity and convergent  
25 thinking is linked to divergent thinking, we hypothesized that tea may also promote

1 convergent thinking, as assumed by Einöther et al. (2015). Einöther et al. (2015)  
2 claimed that tea consumption will improve creative problem solving due to increased  
3 positive affect compared to a neutral control and to a similar extent as a positive control.  
4 Unfortunately, Einöther et al. (2015) did not find significant evidence to support their  
5 assumption.

6 We argue that there are several reasons why no empirical evidence has been found.  
7 First, there are problems in the method of measuring creativity. Previous studies have  
8 used the classic RAT to measure creativity. This subjective test is very likely to be  
9 influenced by individuals' linguistic ability and vocabulary, which were not controlled  
10 for in the former studies. In addition, convergent thinking performance is closely related  
11 to the level of participants' knowledge and intelligence, which was not considered and  
12 controlled for in previous studies. In the current research, we will examine the effect of  
13 tea drinking on convergent thinking by addressing all the above methodological issues.  
14 Second, the tea-drinking scenes and the individuals tea-drinking habits were very  
15 different, which was not controlled for in previous studies. Huang et al. (2018)  
16 controlled for the influence of individual tea-drinking habits and tea-making scenario  
17 regarding the volume, concentration, and temperature of the tea by preparing the tea in  
18 the laboratory in advance, such that they found the effect of tea on divergent thinking.  
19 Therefore, we also used the same methods to exclude the influence of those factors.

20 Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypothesis:

21 *H1: Drinking tea improves performance in convergent thinking activities.*

22 We will test our research hypothesis in two experiments. In particular, we will

1 control for the possible marginal conditions of language ability, intelligence, and tea  
2 preference and habit. Experiment 1 will test the main effect using the RAT to measure  
3 convergent thinking. Experiment 2 will try to replicate the findings in Experiment 1  
4 using another type of convergent thinking task, namely, riddle tasks. In both  
5 experiments, we will measure possible, previously mentioned marginal conditions to  
6 control for their impacts on convergent thinking performance. In particular, we mainly  
7 focused on the acute effect of tea on creativity, and creativity was measured 15-20  
8 minutes after tea drinking. In other words, we are mainly interested in the effects of  
9 psychological function related to creativity that may happen in a very short period of  
10 time after drinking.

11 Moreover, we will test the mediating role of emotion in this relationship since  
12 previous studies have found that tea drinking promotes positive emotion and mood,  
13 which may benefit cognitive thinking (Isen, Labroo, & Durlach, 2004; Desmet &  
14 Schifferstein, 2008; Yoto, Motoki, Murao, & Yokogoshi, 2012). Meta-analyses of mood  
15 and creativity research have shown that a positive mood leads to higher creativity than  
16 a neutral mood (Baas, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2008; Davis, 2009). De Dreu, Baas, and  
17 Nijstad (2008) explained the relationship between mood and creativity through a dual  
18 pathway model. Creativity can be achieved through either cognitive flexibility or  
19 cognitive perseverance, both of which are mediated by mood. Fisher, Ashkanasy, and  
20 Rowe (2012) showed that activating a negative mood had a significant lagged effect on  
21 creative process engagement (CPE) whereas activating a positive mood did not, and  
22 that activating a positive mood had the strongest association with CPE when both  
23 proven goal orientation and supervisory support were high. Therefore, we will also test

1 another hypothesis:

2 *H2*: Positive emotions mediate the effect of drinking tea on convergent thinking.

3

## 4 **2. Experiment 1**

### 5 *2.1 Method*

#### 6 *2.1.1 Participants*

7 With reference to previous classic studies (Einöther et al., 2015; Huang et al., 2018),  
8 the sample sizes of the two studies in this paper were set at 40 and 60. A total of 40 full-  
9 time students were recruited through the Internet and WeChat for Experiment 1. In the  
10 tea group, male subjects accounted for 33.3%, and in the water group, male subjects  
11 accounted for 36.8%. Each participant received \$6 as a reward for participating in the  
12 experiment.

#### 13 *2.1.2 Design*

14 This experiment included two parallel drink conditions: a cup of black tea (Lipton,  
15 a well-known brand but anonymous to participants) and a cup of water, both of which  
16 were approximately 260 ml and were served at a drinkable temperature of 42°C. Black  
17 tea was prepared in advance using a standard process: one tea bag per 150 ml water.  
18 Tea bags were steeped in boiling water for five minutes. Then, the tea and the water for  
19 the control condition were kept at a temperature of 42°C in an electronic kettle. In this  
20 way, we controlled for confounding variables that existed in previous experiments, such  
21 as the brand name of the tea, the experience of preparing the tea, the tea's concentration  
22 and temperature, and the utensils for drinking the tea. Under both conditions, the  
23 drinking amount (ml) of the participants was recorded. We adopted the implicit priming  
24 experimental paradigm such that participants were unaware of the independent variable  
25 manipulation (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Tea consumption was



1 manipulated implicitly by serving tea or water during the greeting stage of the  
2 experiment, so the participants did not realize that drinking was the crucial part of our  
3 study. The participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In that sense,  
4 participants are blinded to their condition.

### 5 *2.1.3 Procedure*

6 In the warming-up stage, the participant arrived at room A as scheduled to wait for  
7 the start of the experiment. A receptionist (experimenter A) poured a cup of pre-  
8 prepared hot drink (water/tea) in front of the participant. The cups provided to the  
9 participants were disposable, which were picked out from a new package in front of  
10 every participant. The purpose of this manipulation was to ensure that participants  
11 wouldn't refuse the drink for hygienic reasons. To avoid the color, trademark and other  
12 factors of the cup affecting participants, the cup was pure white without any pattern or  
13 trademark.

14 Then, the receptionist returned to the seat and asked for participants' personal  
15 information, such as the department, major, grade, student ID number, and mobile  
16 phone number not only for the payment purpose but also for extending the duration of  
17 warming-up stage. To let the participants drink as much as possible, the receptionist  
18 also poured herself a cup of the same drink. The warming-up stage lasted for three to  
19 five minutes so that the participant had enough time to finish the drink. Then, the  
20 receptionist led the participant to room B to perform the experimental task. After the  
21 participant entered room B, the receptionist measured how many milliliters the  
22 participant drank with a measuring tube and recorded it.

23 In room B, the experiment was conducted by experimenter B who didn't know  
24 which drink the participant drank. The participant was asked to complete the tasks on a  
25 computer. The participant completed the Mood Inventory scale, RAT, Raven Advanced

1 Progressive Matrices Test, Mood Inventory scale, tea consumption habits and attitudes  
2 scale, and demographic statistics questionnaire (including Chinese and math scores on  
3 the college entrance examination) in order. Experimenter B checked whether the tasks  
4 were successfully submitted and then directed the participant to go to room A to ask the  
5 receptionist for the payment. The sessions lasted 35 minutes in total.

#### 6 *2.1.4 Measurements*

7 ***Emotional state:*** The mood inventory (MI) scale was used to measure the  
8 participants' emotional state during the experiment. This scale was taken from Phillips,  
9 Bull, Adams, and Fraser (2002) and Oaksford, Morris, Grainger, and Williams (1996)  
10 and used to measure the participants' mood after drank the beverage and after they  
11 completed the convergent thinking task. In this study, the English version of  
12 Chermahini and Hommel (2012) was used for the translation into Chinese. All scale  
13 items underwent a back-translation process (Brislin, 1986) to ensure the internal  
14 validity of our translated scales. The scale has ten items: six measuring happiness  
15 (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89), two measuring physical arousal (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88),  
16 and two measuring anxiety (Cronbach's alpha = 0.93).

17 ***Remote Association Test (RAT):*** The Chinese version of RAT compiled by Xiao,  
18 Yao, and Qiu (2016) was adopted in this study and contained 30 items. In each item  
19 there are three words (e.g., Same–Tennis–Head”), and participants are asked to make  
20 association among the three words (e.g., “please give a meaningful link by figuring out  
21 a word (word association) that mediates the three words”). The scale has good criterion  
22 validity, with a correlation coefficient of 0.34 with the Raven test and coefficients of  
23 0.18 and 0.28 with the Torrance Test of Creativity Test (TTCT) and RCAB, respectively.  
24 In our study, the participants had 10 minutes to complete the test.

25 ***Level of knowledge and intelligence:*** Previous studies have shown that convergent

1 thinking is related to knowledge and intelligence (Lee & Therriault, 2013; Ritter,  
2 Abbing & Van Schie, 2018), so these factors needed to be controlled for. Xiao, Yao, and  
3 Qiu's (2016) Chinese version of the RAT also found that the participants' RAT scores  
4 were moderately correlated with their intelligence (Raven's test) and significantly  
5 correlated with their Chinese and math scores. Therefore, in this study, the Chinese and  
6 mathematics scores of the participants on the national standardized college entrance  
7 examination were selected as one index of the level of knowledge and intelligence of  
8 the participants, and the scores of the participants in the Raven's Advanced Progressive  
9 Matrices (APM) were selected as another index. In consideration of the total duration,  
10 only half of the questions on the APM were used in this study (18 odd-numbered items  
11 were selected). Since the Spearman-Brown split-half reliability of the parity score on  
12 the APM in Barrow's (1990) study was 0.82, we believed that it was reasonable to select  
13 half of the questions. The participants were given 10 minutes to complete the questions.

14 The participants were also asked to report their past Chinese and math scores on  
15 the national standardized college entrance examination. The two questions were as  
16 follows: "What is your past Chinese score in the college entrance examination?" and  
17 "What is your past math score in the college entrance examination?"

18 ***Tea consumption habits and attitudes scale:*** Due to the influence of tea drinking  
19 behavior on participants' physical health and psychological aspects, the study  
20 conducted by Einöther et al. (2015) only recruited participants who were habitual tea  
21 drinkers (those who drank more than 5 cups of tea a week). They believed that positive  
22 emotions would be generated when people who were regular tea drinkers drank their  
23 favorite drink in the lab, so we also asked the subjects whether they drank tea and used  
24 this as a control variable in this study. In addition, studies on caffeine conducted by  
25 Cook, Beaven, Kilduff, and Drawer (2012) showed that even when taking a placebo,

1 participants could show the same stimulatory effect as when consuming actual caffeine,  
2 suggesting that participants' beliefs about drinks may also affect the effects of drinks  
3 on them. Thus, we also measured one's attitude towards the role of tea because if people  
4 believe that drinking tea makes them happier, calmer and more alert, it may also affect  
5 whether it actually works for them. We asked three questions that were rated on a 9-  
6 point Likert scale (1 = "totally disagree", 9 = "totally agree"): "Do you believe in tea  
7 as a pick-me-up?" "Do you believe that drinking tea makes people happier? ", " Do you  
8 think tea makes you calmer?"

## 9 2.2 Results

### 10 2.2.1 Statistical analysis

11 We used SPSS 22.0 to analyze our data. ANCOVA was used to determine the main  
12 effect of tea on performance in the RAT and the moderating effects of beverage type  
13 and tea-drinking habit.

### 14 2.2.2 Main effect

15 Descriptive statistics showed that RAT scores were significantly correlated with  
16 gender, and the scores of males were lower than those of females, which were also  
17 significantly correlated with age and educational background (see Table 1).

18 [insert Table 1 about here]

19 Using ANCOVA controlled for gender, APM scores, education, Chinese and math  
20 scores on the college entrance examination, age, and drink volume, we found that,  
21 consistent with our hypothesis, the participants in the tea group had significantly higher  
22 RAT scores ( $M = 13.89$ ,  $SD = 6.00$ ) than those in the water group ( $M = 12.94$ ,  $SD =$   
23  $6.00$ ) [ $F(1, 34) = 5.09$ ,  $p = 0.035$ ,  $\eta^2_p = 0.195$ , *observed power* = 0.576].

### 24 2.2.3 Moderating effects

25 Further analysis showed that there was a marginally significant interaction between

1 the type of drink (drinking water/drinking tea) and whether or not the participants  
2 usually drank tea [ $F(1, 34) = 4.23, p = 0.052, \eta^2_p = 0.168, \text{observed power} = 0.501$ ].  
3 Specifically, in the tea group, 14 participants who drank tea at ordinary times had the  
4 highest convergent thinking creativity scores ( $M = 23.20, SD = 3.01$ ), which was much  
5 higher than those who did not usually drink tea ( $M = 13.11, SD = 1.52$ ). The difference  
6 between the tea group ( $M = 11.91, SD = 3.24$ ) and the water group ( $M = 10.84, SD =$   
7  $1.84$ ) was relatively small for participants who did not usually drink tea (see Figure 1).

8 [insert Figure 1 about here]

9 The main effect of participants' Raven test scores on RAT scores was significant  
10 [ $F(1, 34) = 6.24, p = 0.021, \eta^2_p = 0.229, \text{observed power} = 0.664$ ]. The Pearson  
11 correlation coefficient between the participants' Raven test scores and RAT scores was  
12 0.300 ( $p = 0.060$ ). This is similar to the results of Xiao, Yao, and Qiu's (2016) research,  
13 showing that scores on the Chinese version of the RAT were correlated with the  
14 intelligence levels of the participants.

15 After controlling for gender, drink volume, attitude towards tea, age, and  
16 educational background, MANOVA revealed no significant differences between  
17 emotional states reported by the participants in the tea group and in the water group,  
18 both immediately after drinking tea and after completing the RAT and Raven tasks.

19 Finally, similar to previous studies (Huang et al., 2018), this study found the "split  
20 half effect". The scores on the first half (15 questions) and the second half of the RAT  
21 were separately scored and then added to the MANOVA model. After controlling for  
22 the same variables, we found no significant differences [ $F(1, 34) = 3.30, p = 0.084, \eta^2_p$   
23  $= 0.136, \text{observed power} = 0.410$ ] in the RAT scores from the first half between the tea  
24 group and the water group. However, with the RAT scores from the second half, the  
25 scores of participants in the tea group ( $M = 8.00, SD = 2.83$ ) were significantly higher

1 than those in the water group ( $M = 7.35$ ,  $SD = 2.85$ ) [ $F(1, 34) = 5.90$ ,  $p = 0.024$ ,  $\eta^2_p =$   
2  $0.219$ , *observed power* = 0.639], suggesting that tea leads to persistent problem-solving  
3 convergent thinking. We call this phenomenon the "split half effect".

#### 4 *2.3 Discussion*

5 The results provide preliminary support for our hypothesis that drinking tea can  
6 enhance performance in convergent thinking tasks, and the effect was stronger for  
7 people who usually drink tea. This study first demonstrated the role of tea in enhancing  
8 convergent thinking. It is worth noting that in both cases, the participants did not drink  
9 much tea. Moreover, the participants did not spend much time on the task. That is, even  
10 if you drink a limited amount of tea (89.57 ml on average, which is not significantly  
11 different from 89.74 ml of water in the water group), tea may still enhance performance  
12 in convergent thinking tasks. This result indicated that the tea-drinking event itself  
13 (rather than the biological components of tea) played an enhancing role. This conjecture  
14 needs to be further evaluated.

15 However, the results did not show that mood was the mechanism for explaining  
16 how drinking tea significantly improved convergent thinking. There are several  
17 possible explanations. First, our experiment did not include the tea preparation process  
18 that affects emotion (Dohle, Rail, & Siegrist, 2014). Second, unlike previous studies  
19 (Einöther et al., 2015, 2016), we did not purposely recruit tea drinkers as participants.  
20 We were interested in a more generalized effect of tea consumption on convergent  
21 thinking for common people. However, tea was not liked by everyone. Only a few of  
22 our participants had tea drinking habits. The four most frequently consumed beverages  
23 reported by participants were water, juice, carbonated beverages, and milk tea, all of  
24 which were sweet drinks except for water. It has been shown that emotion is related to  
25 food and beverage consumption, especially to their sensory properties, e.g., sweet taste

1 is related to happiness and surprise, while bitter taste is related to anger and disgust  
2 (Rousmans, Robin, Dittmar, & Vernet-Maury, 2000). Hence, participants who did not  
3 have tea-drinking habits and were accustomed to sweet drinks might experience  
4 negative emotions caused by a bitter taste and unfamiliar beverage, which may offset  
5 any positive emotions elicited by the tea.

6 We attempted to determine the psychological mechanisms that mediated the  
7 performance difference shown by the two groups of participants within such a short  
8 period of time. Therefore, in Experiment 2, we explored other possible mediating  
9 mechanisms. In addition, we wanted to confirm whether the result regarding the effects  
10 of tea on convergent thinking task performance in Experiment 1 using the RAT to  
11 measure convergent thinking creativity could be replicated through other types of  
12 creative tasks. Hence, in Experiment 2, we used riddle tasks to measure convergent  
13 thinking. With this design, we tested whether the influence of tea on different  
14 convergent thinking tasks could be universal.

### 15 **3. Experiment 2**

16 The research intends to systematically replicate the research in Experiment 1 and  
17 determine whether tea can promote performance in other types of convergent thinking  
18 tasks. Therefore, we replaced the RAT with riddle tasks in this experiment.

19 Additionally, we measured participants' motivation and involvement to control for  
20 the impact of these factors on convergent thinking performance.

#### 21 *3.1 Method*

##### 22 *3.1.1 Participants*

23 A total of 60 (19 males) participants were recruited through the Internet and  
24 WeChat. After controlling for the intelligence level of the participants, 59 valid data  
25 points were obtained. The participants were full-time undergraduate or graduate

1 students at Peking University, with an average age of 21.82 ( $SD = 2.47$ ). Each  
2 participant received \$6 as a reward for participating in the experiment.

### 3 *3.1.2 Design*

4 This experiment included two drink conditions: a cup of black tea (the brand was  
5 Lipton, but the participant was unaware of the brand) and a cup of water, both of which  
6 were approximately 260 ml, and the temperature was 42°C. Under both conditions, the  
7 amount drank (ml) by the participants was recorded. The participants were randomly  
8 assigned to one of two conditions.

### 9 *3.1.3 Procedure*

10 The reception process and precautions were the same as in Experiment 1. Then, the  
11 participants entered another designated room and were guided by another experimenter  
12 to complete the experimental task on a computer. The participants completed the  
13 emotional mood inventory (MI) scale, riddle task 1, motivation and involvement scale  
14 1, riddle task 2, motivation and involvement scale 2, Raven Advanced Progressive  
15 Matrices Test, motivation and involvement scale 2, mood inventory (MI) scale, tea  
16 consumption habits and attitude scale, and the final demographic questionnaire  
17 (including Chinese and math scores in the college entrance examination). The session  
18 lasted 40 minutes in total.

### 19 *3.1.4 Measurements*

20 The measurements of demographic variables, knowledge level, and intelligence  
21 level of the participants were consistent with the materials used in Experiment 1. The  
22 remaining materials were as follows:

23 ***Chinese riddle tasks:*** There are two riddle tasks used in this study, taken from Chen  
24 Li's (2008) research. Riddle task 1 consisted of 10 pairs of medium difficulty riddles  
25 (average prototype heuristic rate was 0.58). Riddle task 2 consisted of 10 pairs of high



1 difficulty riddles (average prototype heuristic rate was 0.14). In this experiment, the  
2 participants learned the prototype riddles first. The participants were presented with  
3 both the question and the answer of the prototype riddles at the same time (“有心记不  
4 住，有眼看不见”，meaning that "you couldn't remember with a heart and couldn't see  
5 with eyes," and the answer is “亡”(lost something) (see the Appendix for details). They  
6 needed to solve riddle tasks 1 and 2 based on the corresponding method they learned  
7 from the prototype riddles. The participants were given 3 minutes to complete each task,  
8 and two riddle tasks together took 6 minutes.

9 ***Tea consumption habits and attitude scale:*** In addition to the items used in  
10 Experiment 1, we also added a scale about the participant's impression of the  
11 experimenter. It contained 2 additional items: "What do you think of the receptionist's  
12 enthusiasm level?" and "What do you think of the receptionist happiness level?" (rated  
13 on a 9-point Likert scale: 1 was “the lowest” and 9 was “the highest”). We added this  
14 scale as an operational test to confirm that the way the participants were treated would  
15 not affect the experimental results.

16 ***Motivation and involvement scale:*** Based on Einöther et al.'s (2016) research, we  
17 adapted the motivation and involvement scale. Whenever a participant completed a task,  
18 we asked the participant questions about motivation and involvement. There were 5  
19 items in total: "What is your concentration level in the past X minutes?", "What is your  
20 involvement level with the task in the past X minutes?", "How much happiness did you  
21 feel in the past X minutes?", "How happy have you felt in the past X minutes?", and  
22 "How much stress have you experienced in the past 10 minutes?" The ratings were  
23 scored on a 9-point Likert scale (1 was “the lowest” and 9 was “the highest”).

## 24 *3.2 Results*

### 25 *3.2.1 Data checks*

1 The results of the operation test showed that there were no significant differences  
2 between the impressions of the experimenters reported by the tea group participants  
3 and the water group participants. The descriptive statistics of the main variables are shown  
4 in Table 2.

### 5 3.2.2 Main effect

6 The participants' scores on the two riddle tasks were summed to obtain a total score,  
7 which represented the convergent thinking score (see Figure 2). We found that after  
8 controlling for the participants' Chinese scores, math scores, intelligence levels and tea-  
9 drinking habits, the scores of the tea group participants on the riddle task ( $M = 10.94$ ,  
10  $SD = 2.86$ ) were significantly higher than those of the water group ( $M = 9.00$ ,  $SD =$   
11  $3.01$ ) [ $F(1, 58) = 6.27$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ,  $\eta^2_p = 0.106$ , *observed power* = 0.691].

12 [Insert Figure 2 about here]

13 The results (see Table 2) showed that there was a significant positive correlation  
14 between the first and second riddle tasks. The Raven scores were significantly  
15 positively related to the scores of the two riddle tasks; The type of the drinks influenced  
16 the performance of the second part of the riddle task: Participants who drank tea had  
17 higher scores in the second riddle task than those who drank water. The math scores on  
18 the college entrance examination were significantly positively related to the Raven  
19 scores and the Chinese scores on the college entrance examination.

20 MANOVA showed that participants in the tea group had significantly higher  
21 scores ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ) in the second riddle task than those in the water group  
22 [ $F(1, 58) = 5.29$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ,  $\eta^2_p = 0.091$ , *observed power* = 0.617]. The difference  
23 between the scores for the tea group participants ( $M = 7.53$ ,  $SD = 2.01$ ) and the water  
24 group participants ( $M = 6.59$ ,  $SD = 2.31$ ) on the medium difficulty riddle task was not  
25 significant [ $F(1, 58) = 2.95$ ,  $p = 0.092$ ,  $\eta^2_p = 0.053$ , *observed power* = 0.392].

1 [Insert Table 2 about here]

2 *3.2.3 Moderating effects*

3 Furthermore, the influence of participants' level of interest and involvement in the  
4 task was analyzed through ANCOVA. After controlling for factors such as gender, age,  
5 education, milliliters consumed, Raven test scores, Chinese scores, and math scores, it  
6 was found that there were no significant differences in the participants' motivation and  
7 involvement in riddle tasks 1 [ $F(1, 58) = 0.104, p = 0.748$ ] and 2 [ $F(1, 58) = 0.003, p$   
8  $= 0.956$ ] between the two groups.

9 Similar to Experiment 1, we did not find a main effect of drinks on emotion either  
10 before or after cognitive tasks.

11 *3.3 Discussion*

12 Experiment 2 replicated the results of Experiment 1, suggesting that drinking tea  
13 can significantly contribute to convergent thinking. We observed the same effect of  
14 drinking tea in two different convergent thinking tasks, including the RAT and riddle  
15 task, providing substantial evidence of the consistent positive effect of drinking tea on  
16 convergent thinking, especially convergent thinking in semantics.

17 The results of the research by Einöther et al. (2015) showed that the response time  
18 in the tea group was faster than that in the water group (marginally significant), while  
19 there were no significant differences in the simple and difficult RAT scores between the  
20 two groups. Our research showed that the participants' level of knowledge and  
21 intelligence must be controlled for in convergent thinking tasks, and the difficulty level  
22 of convergent thinking tasks must also be considered. The results of Experiment 2  
23 showed that the performance in the tea group in the high difficulty riddle task was  
24 significantly higher than that in the water group, while in the medium difficulty task,  
25 there was only a marginally significant difference between the two groups. This may

1 have been due to a ceiling effect, which means that both groups could do well because  
2 the task was relatively easy, and any differences are not likely to be significant. This  
3 means that the role of tea drinking was mainly reflected in improved performance in  
4 the high difficulty creative tasks. Our research showed that participants' intelligence  
5 level and task difficulty should be taken into more consideration in the design of  
6 experiments.

#### 7 **4. General Discussion**

8 The purpose of our study was to test whether tea drinking improved convergent  
9 thinking and whether emotions mediated this effect. Experiments with two different  
10 tasks produced similar findings. Experiment 1 showed that drinking tea resulted in  
11 better performance on the RAT than drinking water. Experiment 2 repeated the results  
12 of Experiment 1 with a different convergent thinking task (solving riddles) and showed  
13 that those who drank tea performed better than those who drank water on difficult riddle  
14 tasks. Experiment 2 also found that participants' knowledge level, intelligence level,  
15 and task difficulty had moderating effects on the impact of tea drinking on convergent  
16 thinking task performance.

17 Our study was the first to demonstrate a main effect of tea drinking on convergent  
18 thinking, which is consistent with Einöther et al.'s (2016) hypothesis. Although the  
19 study by Einöther et al. (2016) did not find a significant effect, the direction of their  
20 results was consistent with the hypothesis. Our results may have been due to various  
21 reasons, such as consideration of the moderating effects of intelligence level and  
22 knowledge level and controlling for variables such as beverage temperature and  
23 concentration. Our study used more rigorous experimental methods and procedures to  
24 demonstrate that tea enhanced convergent thinking, which could be a summary of  
25 previous research and guidance for future research.

1 In particular, there are some interesting and valuable findings in our study. First,  
2 we revealed the "split half effect"; that is, tea drinking can significantly help maintain  
3 and improve performance in the second half of cognitive tasks. This means that the  
4 enhancing effects of tea on convergent creative performance lies in its ability to  
5 maintain tenacity and persistence, which implies that drinking tea is beneficial for those  
6 who are engaged in creative work or easy to fatigue.

7 Second, the role of tea drinking was mainly reflected in improved performance in  
8 the high difficulty creative tasks. The performance in the tea group in the high difficulty  
9 riddle task was significantly better than that in the water group, while in the medium  
10 difficulty tasks, there was only a marginally significant difference between the two  
11 groups. Our finding explains that an important function of tea is to improve  
12 performance in high-level creative tasks (Canli, Omura, Haas, Fallgatter, Constable, &  
13 Lesch, 2005; Canli, Qiu, Omura, Congdon, Haas, Amin, & Lesch, 2006) that require  
14 high cognitive load.

15 Third, it was also found that whether a participant had the habit of drinking tea  
16 moderated the main effect of tea drinking on convergent thinking, which was consistent  
17 with the hypotheses of Einöther et al. (2015) and Einöther et al. (2016). They suggested  
18 that people who like drinking tea would show improved positive moods after preparing  
19 tea or drinking tea. This result has some implications for us. The habit of drinking tea,  
20 if developed on a regular basis, is beneficial in the short term for everyday creative  
21 activities in our daily lives. In the long run, if you are a habitual tea drinker, the next  
22 time you need to enhance your creative performance, the beneficial effect of drinking  
23 tea will be much higher than those who don't drink tea regularly.

#### 24 *4.1 Limitations and implications for future research*

25 There are still some limitations in our research. First, we did not measure the

1 biological composition of the tea. The results of Einöther and Martens (2013) showed  
2 that two biological components, caffeine and theanine, are beneficial to attention, and  
3 attention is an essential part of cognitive function. A cup of tea (250 ml) typically  
4 contains 35-61 mg (average: 48 mg) of caffeine and 4.5-22.5 mg (average: 13.5 mg) of  
5 theanine. In most previous experiments examining tea's effects on cognitive  
6 performance, the tea contained more than 50 mg of caffeine or 10 mg theanine (Bryan,  
7 2008). In the present experiment, our participants absorbed relatively small amounts of  
8 tea ingredients (most of our participants drank approximately 180 ml of tea, which may  
9 contain less than the amount of caffeine and theanine consumed in a typical study.)

10       Second, there are limitations in our samples. On the one hand, the sample sizes in  
11 our studies were relatively small. The sample size was determined by referring to the  
12 classical research paradigm in this field. With reference to previous classic studies  
13 (Einöther et al., 2015, 2016; Huang et al., 2018), the sample sizes of the two studies in  
14 this paper were set at 40 and 60. Further study could enlarge the sample size to replicate  
15 the result. On the other hand, knowledge level and intelligence level were important  
16 control variables in our research, but our participants' knowledge level and intelligence  
17 level were high. Most participants were undergraduate students at Peking University, a  
18 leading university in China, and their intelligence level and knowledge level far exceed  
19 the average level. It is worth considering whether our experimental results can be  
20 replicated if our participants had more diverse levels of intelligence and knowledge.  
21 However, we assume that the effect may be more significant for people with common  
22 levels of knowledge and intelligence because knowledgeable people may not need to  
23 drink much tea to solve difficult intellectual tasks.

24       Third, time between tea intake and testing is short. But after tea intake, participants  
25 had to answer some questions about their information, such as the department, major,

1 grade, student number, and mobile number while drinking tea, which took 3-5 minutes.  
2 Then, the receptionist would lead the participant to room B where the Experimenter  
3 directed the participant to perform the experimental tasks. In room B the participant  
4 would complete MI scale first and then, complete the testing of dependent variable. All  
5 of the activities will cost 15-20 minutes which is enough for tea to take effect (Einöther  
6 et al., 2015).

7 In short, drinking tea can enhance performance in creative thinking tasks. Future  
8 research should focus on specific mechanisms and clarify which variables moderate the  
9 impact of tea consumption on convergent thinking. There are several important research  
10 directions for the future.

11 First, the expansion of ecological validity needs to extend laboratory experiments  
12 to actual tea drinking environments as well as to different cultural environments.

13 The second is the exploration of mediating mechanisms. Previous research has  
14 found that people tend to associate tea drinking with a specific set of personality traits,  
15 such as smart, creative, elegant, confident, and stable (Lara et al., 2011). It may be that  
16 when participants are stimulated by tea, the mental representation of a tea drinker is  
17 also activated, and they unconsciously think that they should be smarter and more  
18 creative. Another factor worth considering is the level of attention. Previous studies  
19 have shown that caffeine and theanine in tea can improve attention (e.g., Hindmarch et  
20 al., 2000) and performance in attention tasks and attention plays a very important role  
21 in other advanced cognitive processes, especially the creative process (Einöther et al.,  
22 2015; Huang et al., 2018).

23 The third is to explore at what stage of creativity tea takes effect. The American  
24 psychologist Runco (2004) suggested that the creative process includes six basic stages.  
25 We approximated that the effect of tea on creativity is most likely to occur in the

1 inspiration stage when creative ideas transferred from the preconscious processing into  
2 conscious awareness (Kounios & Beeman, 2009). This is a time when ideas explode  
3 and require rich attention resources (Burton, 1999). In the future, we can explore the  
4 differential impacts of tea consumption at each stage.

5 Finally, we can explore the long-term and short-term effects. At present, research  
6 on tea and creativity has mainly focused on the immediate effects of tea. Engagement  
7 with these creativity tasks begins after a few minutes of drinking tea (Einöther et al.,  
8 2015; Huang et al., 2018). At this time, the pharmacological effects of the tea chemicals  
9 have not started to fully work, which shows that it is the psychological effects of tea  
10 that is active. Over long periods, will long-term tea drinking also improve performance  
11 in creative activities? This notion needs further verification.

12

13

#### 14 **Ethic Statement**

15 The research was conducted in compliance with all APA Ethical Guidelines for the  
16 treatment of human participants. Neither the manuscript nor the data have been  
17 published previously, nor are they under consideration for publication elsewhere, and  
18 its publication is approved by all authors.

19

#### 20 **Acknowledgment**

21 Declarations of interest: none.

#### 22 **Funding:**

23 Acknowledgement: This work was supported in part by NSFC Grant #31971013,  
24 Beijing Well-being Foundation Grant #0020344, and Taetea Group to L.W.



1

## 2 **Author Contributions**

3 L.W. conceived the main research idea. L.W. and Y.H. made the research design. Y.H.  
4 ran the experiments. Y.H., J.Y., and L.W. performed the statistics. Y.J. and L.W. were  
5 responsible for making the first English draft of the manuscript. All authors were  
6 involved in the manuscript preparation.

7

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Table 1. *Descriptive Statistical Results of The Main Variables (Experiment 1)*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Gender	-	-									
2 Education	2.43	.50	-.10								
3 Age	22.93	2.47	-.13	.32*							
4 Tea / water	.48	.51	-.04	-.09	.04						
5 Whether to drink tea	1.65	.48	-.22	-.09	-.07	-.14					
6 Drinking amount(ml)	89.65	53.15	-.26	.16	-.01	.00	-.25				
7 RAT score	12.48	6.32	.34*	-.11	-.02	-.02	-.17	.21			
8 Raven score	12.53	3.80	-.09	-.20	.16	.16	.29	-.18	.30		
9 Chinese score	121.86	8.52	.08	.17	.23	.23	-.02	.17	.27	-.07	
10 Math score	133.34	11.05	-.13	-.02	.10	.05	.11	.23	.11	.25	.07

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*Note.*  $N = 40$ . \*  $p < .05$ .

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Table 2. *Descriptive Statistical Results of The Main Variables (Experiment 2)*

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Var</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Gender	-	-										
2 Education	21.82	2.47	-.05									
3 Age	2.33	.51	-.30*	.76**								
4 Tea / water	.47	.50	-.08	.11	.07							
5 Whether to drink tea	1.62	.49	-.24	-.16	-.14	.19						
6 Drinking amount(ml)	76.78	56.80	<b>-.28*</b>	.08	.03	.00	.00					
7 Riddle1 score	7.07	2.19	-.01	-.25	-.21	-.23	-.07	-.21				
8 Riddle2 score	2.95	1.55	.19	-.17	-.11	<b>-.32*</b>	-.20	.03	<b>.32*</b>			
9 Raven score	12.25	2.90	-.13	-.11	-.04	.02	.04	.02	<b>.34**</b>	<b>.27*</b>		
10 Chinese score	120.03	10.08	.20	-.21	-.26	-.13	-.17	.04	.10	<b>.32*</b>	.17	
11 Math score	132.69	14.19	-.19	-.31	-.19	-.01	.05	.04	.22	.17	<b>.44**</b>	<b>.29*</b>

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*Note.*  $N = 59$ . \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

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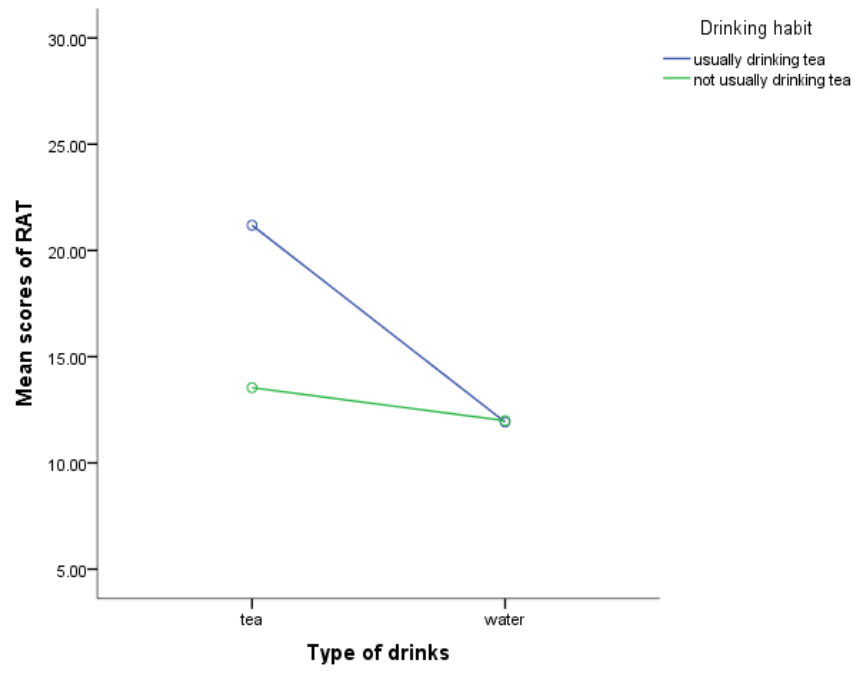


Figure 1. Moderating effect of drinking habit on RAT scores (Experiment 1).

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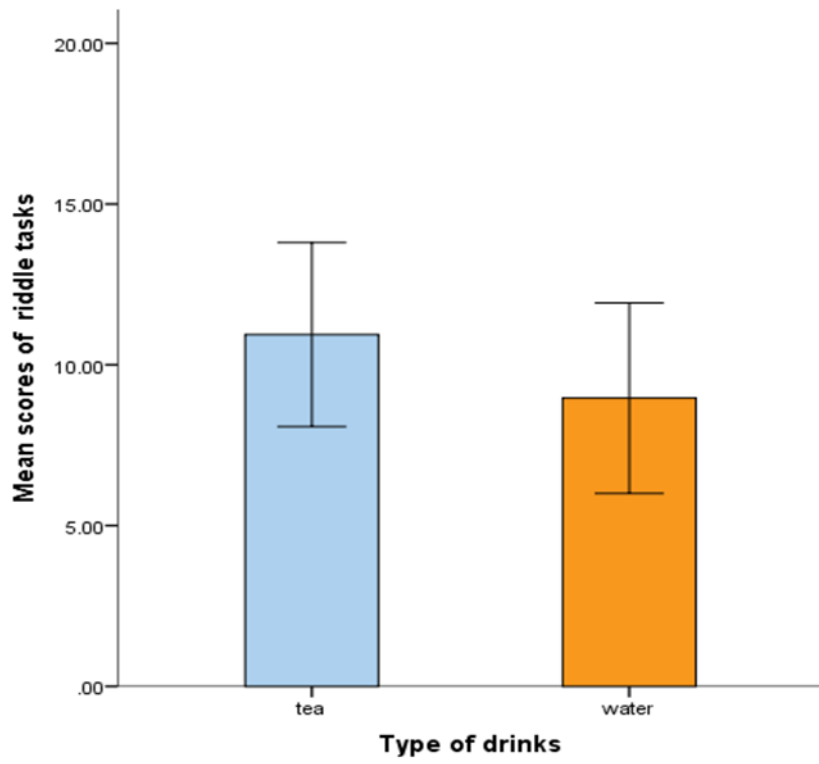


Figure 2. Main effect of drinking on the total scores of the two riddle tasks (Experiment 2).

1 **Appendix: The description of Chinese riddle task**

2 The riddles are based on the fact that Chinese characters are hieroglyphics. For example,  
3 in the prototype riddle, the Chinese character "忘" means "can't remember" and "盲"  
4 means "blind", respectively. As you can see, the top half of these two characters is the  
5 same character "亡", which means "lost something". As to the bottom halves, "心"  
6 means "heart" and "目" means "eyes". That is, “忘” means “lost the heart so you can’t  
7 remember” while “盲” means “lost eyes so you can’t see.” So when the riddle is asking,  
8 "you couldn't remember with a heart and couldn't see with eyes, what character is it?"  
9 the answer is the character "亡" ("lost something").

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