An Empirical Study on Customer Satisfaction, Perception, and Brand Image in Starbucks Coffee in India, Asia

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the brand image, experience, quality, and services offered by Starbucks that will bring customer loyalty from customer satisfaction. The study analyzes how customer loyalty and brand experience affect the quality improvements of Starbucks Coffee as corporate brands play a vital role in achieving higher company's performance, like sales. It makes more incentives to satisfy the potential customers and develops a drawn-out relationship with them. This study concludes that companies with higher customer loyalty and satisfaction tend to have higher market share, and move further by cost reduction. Therefore, companies could substantially pay attention to all of these variables to have an everlasting profitability as this will lead to gain competitive advantage in the market.

Keywords: Brand Image, Customer Satisfaction, Competitive Advantage, Experiences, Potential Customers, Profitability, Relationship Building, Success

INTRODUCTION

Starbucks Corporation is an American coffee house. Its headquarter is in Seattle, Washington. Starbucks Coffee aims to operate in different countries and reach over 70 countries in the early 2020. Generally, Starbucks Coffee serves hot and cold drinks, pastries, and snacks in their stores.

Zev Siegl, Jerry Baldwin, and Gordon Bowker are the founders of Starbucks coffee. In the 1980s, Howard Schultz owned the coffee shop after he went to Milan. There were more franchises opened by Schultz in the United States. Recently, coffee exists as an important element of people's daily life. We all can freely go to coffee shops to enjoy some coffee and desserts. We could also socialize and interact with other people in the coffee shops.

Starbucks Coffee is the largest international coffeehouse chain with more than 30,000 stores across the world. It decided to expand their business in India in 2011. Hence, they collaborated with a local company, Tata Global Beverage, to compete with other coffee shops in India. They were both under a 50:50 joint management and became "Tata

Starbucks Private Limited". In India, they named it "Starbucks Coffee Tata Alliance". The first Starbucks Coffee shop in India was opened on 19 October 2012, located in a two-levels store in Mumbai. Over the years, they expanded their business and opened more stores across India. There have been about 191 Starbucks Coffee stores in India until the year 2020.

Starbucks decided to enter India's market since they were seeking a new market. India has the second largest population in the world with a high development market. The "Starbucks Coffee Tata Alliance" also focuses on customer preferences by modifying their menu and adding in some local flavors to the products they sell to boost their sales. For instance, they launched local foods such as cottage cheese rolls and chicken tikka Panini in their stores to attract more customers. The coffee beans they used are also sourced in India.

Starbucks is the biggest coffee company in the world providing unique and exclusive experience through their services and products to their customers. Its premium quality coffee helps it to position itself in the market. For example, "Tazo Tea" was introduced in India to specially attract tea lovers. Starbucks Coffee monitors the production step by step from to ensure its good quality. Furthermore, clear mission and objectives are provided to their employees to encourage their collaborative work to achieve goals.

All efforts to increase customer loyalty and satisfaction create a strong customer base. Premium services and products provided provide unique experience to customers and they are willing to pay more for the enjoyment. Therefore, Starbucks uses value-based pricing strategy, allowing them to earn more through good quality beverages and foods along with great customer service. Addedly the following PESTLE analysis could bring another insight about strategies to devise.

Firstly, the political features of Starbucks. Politics is about acquiring resources as it gets more political attention from the west and in other resource countries. The political stability in the country must be one of the considerations of the organization. Secondly, the economic features of Starbucks. The global economic downturn is Starbucks' main foreign economic campaign. The company is facing the rising costs of labors and the number of labors. The decrease in net income and inflation has impacted Starbucks directly from an economic aspect. The exchange rates of local currency, the environment of economic markets and the company tax rate build some pressure on Starbucks.

Thirdly, the social and cultural aspects of Starbucks. Starbucks has to make a trade-off between offering products at a cheaper price or to maintain its high quality as the selling point. Socio-cultural levels of human education in the local market could also affect Starbucks as this factor will affect the choice of locals on purchasing products. The fourth factor is Starbucks' technical features. Starbucks Coffee is a great place as consumers are benefited from Starbucks technological convenience. Youngsters and working adults may experience free and smooth networking in Starbucks coffee shops. It made a strategic move by partnering with Apple through the distribution of discount coupons to help it ride the wave easily. Starbucks also enables mobile payments for the company to introduce Wi-Fi capabilities in its stores.

The fifth is the natural feature of Starbucks. Starbucks' business will trouble the activists and international legal teams. They also have an impact on environmental laws and regulations, disasters in coffee-producing countries and other environmental emissions

at the global level. Lastly is Starbucks legal feature. Companies want to work for the public environment and contribute to compliance with government rules as Starbucks imports consumer goods. The management of the company must not be against any laws and rules in the business and trade markets. This PESTLE analysis is the evidence that the external environment of the company is stable.

This study focused on brand image, customer loyalty, and customer satisfaction in Starbucks Coffee in India. These aspects are believed to be the key for Starbucks Coffee success in the highly competitive business markets. The basic marketing concept is to provide customer satisfaction by fulfilling their needs and therefore their high satisfaction increases the customer turnover rate and bring customer loyalty. This study investigates the impact of customer satisfaction and customers loyalty on Starbucks Coffee in India. Thus, this study finds out the relation among the brand image, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty and indicates the level of how they are associated.

Brand image refers to customer's perception towards a brand (Keller, 1993). It reflects the perceptions of consumers and their feelings towards a specific good (Amstrong, Kotler, & Opresnik, 2020, p. 250). Partially, it has a significant positive effect upon the sales volume increase of SME's products (Niode & Hinelo, 2020). The brands and equity of a company are noble as it is hard to be copied. However, there might be differences from one brand to another as the brand outlines the organization's value (De Chernatony, 1999). The trade between consumers and company does not limited to the products as it also represents the company's value (Ind, 1997).

According to Amstrong et al (2020), customers form expectations about the product offered in the market in terms of value and satisfaction. Therefore, customer satisfaction is obtained when their expectation reached what they have imagined. Customer satisfaction will positively affect the organization through repeated purchase and brand loyalty (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011).

Brand experiences is categorized into four different aspects, including educational, entertainment, escapist entertainment and esthetic. These aspects are related to customer loyalty and the strong relationship between these two variables is proven. Customer's good experience creates a strong brand image to the organization, leading to customer loyalty.

Customer loyalty deals with as brands, services, and store loyalty and it is important for maintaining a code of conduct (Dick & Basu, 1994). Customer loyalty also means the strategy that creates mutual or definite common rewards to benefit companies and customers in many aspects (Reichheld & Detrick, 2003). One of the benefits is that companies could increase the revenue and sales of the product. It is clearly mentioned that with loyal customers, companies can maximize or earn huge profits since loyal customers are completely willing to earn or purchase more frequently, spend money on trying new and innovative products or services and recommend the products and services to others (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Thus, loyalty directly links to the success and profitability of a company (Eakuru & Mat, 2008). Therefore, loyalty is a described attitude-behavior relationship that allows integrated investigation as a result of customer loyalty (Dick & Basu, 1994).

Potential customers are those who are capable of becoming the future customers of an organization. According to Chen, Liu, & Chen (2016), potential customers are searched

and analyzed in specific market segments either through the real world or internet. Identifying the correct potential customers and providing them with services and products that could meet their needs will help to create a brand value to them therefore making them satisfied with and loyal to the brand.

Competitive advantage can be defined as the benefits gained by a company when they have a large market position with less competitors. To get competitive advantage, companies must ensure that they are working something special and irreplaceable (Ghemawat & Rivkin, 1998). Starbucks keeps their position in the international market by distinguishing their products with extremely good services and products. This makes them create a quite valuable economy in the market.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was carried out by various data collection techniques or methods. Mainly, the techniques were filling out questionnaires, documentation studies, charts, and tables. A questionnaire was more preferred since it is considered as a more structured technique to collect data consisting of a series of multiple questions that can be answered by the respondents easily. Questionnaires which are also considered as an interview format, can be illustrated as measurement of an instrument containing multiple questions to obtain various information from respondents. The population in this study completely include consumers who make purchases at Starbucks Coffee who are strongly or likely keen towards consuming Starbucks coffee.

The major reason behind choosing a questionnaire is due to its high level of assurance of the validity and credibility aspects embedded through the collected database on it as it insistently focuses on thinking about the instruments of the questionnaire that best suits this survey and research. The main reason behind this stops on one of the most valuable attributes of having no biasness or partiality. However, it is probably impossible to achieve a particular goal of no-biases by some different research paths, like focused group discussion and interview method etc. It can definitely cause the visual clues expressed by guided researchers and that would definitely affect and guide the attitude of respondents more and less.

Primary data is considered as one of the pure methods of collecting data. In this study, the researchers gathered and obtained data through distributed questionnaires to the respondents. The results obtained from questionnaires were analyzed to find out the exact views and true opinions of the customers regarding their satisfaction, brand experience and service quality affecting their loyalty. This study collected the primary data through information from questionnaires filled in by 105 respondents.

The primary data of this research was collected from surveys on loyal customers of Starbucks Coffee. In this questionnaire, there are qualitative and quantitative questions created for the respondents to fill in. One of the sections was presented with Likert scale of 1 to 5, to rate their agreement range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There is also an open-ended question asking about their opinion and suggestion which require critical thinking skills of the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 below shows results abstracted through a well-designed and conducted survey on customer satisfaction and experiences of Starbucks products. A questionnaire survey was conducted and answered by 105 respondents. The survey form was distributed into two sections: demographic and questionnaire. This questionnaire comprised multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. In the open-ended questions, the respondents were expected to provide their valuable comments, suggestions, and recommendations for further improvement of Starbucks products and customer service. The objective behind these questions was that the customers can state or express anything they felt missing or their expectation from Starbucks.

Table 1. Survey Result Summary

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Female	75	71.4%
	Male	30	28.6%
Age	Below 20 years old	12	11.4%
	20-29 years old	90	85.7%
	30-39 years old	3	2.9%
	40-49 years old	0	0.0%
	50 years old and above	0	0.0%
Occupations	Student	94	89.5%
	Employed	7	6.7%
	Unemployed	4	3.8%
Have you heard of Starbucks Coffee before?	Yes	94	89.5%
	No	8	7.6%
	Maybe	3	2.9%
Source of Information About the Product	Friends/ Family Members/ Colleagues	64	61.0%
	Social Media	33	31.4%
	Ads in the mobile app (excluding social media)	3	2.9%
	Newspapers/ Magazines	4	3.8%
	Online Search	1	0.9%
Customers' Favorite Product	Coffee	35	33.3%
	Frappuccino	28	26.7%
	Chocolate cream chip	23	21.9%
	Others	19	18.1%

Likelihood of Customer to Recommend Starbucks Coffee to Friends or Colleagues	Extremely Likely	25	23.8%
	Moderately Likely	41	39%
	Neutral	22	21%
	Moderately Not Likely	6	5.7%
	Not At All	11	10.5%
Overalls Customer Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction Level	Very Satisfied	31	29.5%
	Satisfied	39	37.1%
	Neutral	23	22.0%
	Dissatisfied	6	5.7%
	Very Dissatisfied	6	5.7%
Customers' Review on Price of Beverages	Extremely expensive	41	39.0%
	Expensive	39	37.0%
	Reasonable	21	20.0%
	Cheap	0	0.0%
	Extremely Cheap	4	4.0%
Customers' Rate to The Starbucks Product Quality	Very Satisfied	45	42.9%
	Satisfied	33	31.4%
	Neutral	20	19.0%
	Dissatisfied	5	4.8%
	Very Dissatisfied	2	1.9%
Customers' Perception of Starbucks Customer Service	Very Satisfied	38	36.2%
	Satisfied	44	41.9%
	Neutral	17	16.2%
	Dissatisfied	4	3.8%
	Very Dissatisfied	2	1.9%
Changes of Customer Perception	Much More Favorable	20	19.0%
	More Favorable	40	38.1%
	Neutral	33	31.4%
	Less Favorable	6	5.7%
	Much Less Favorable	6	5.7%
The Frequency of Starbucks Promotion	Very Often	13	12.4%
	Often	27	25.7%
	Neutral	42	40.0%
	Rarely	15	14.3%
	Very Rarely	8	7.6%
The Frequency of Customers Purchase	Everyday	0	0.0%
	Once a week	5	4.8%
	Two or three times in a	7	6.7%
	week	11	10.5%
	Once in a month	9	8.6%
	Two or three times in a	56	53.3%
	month	17	16.2%

Customers' Favorite Starbucks Service	Rarely		
	Never	54	51.4%
		24	22.9%
	Dine In	14	13.3%
	Drive-thru	27	25.7%
	Online Ordering Apps		
Factors that Attract the Customers to Buy Starbucks Coffee's Product	All above	11	10.5%
		54	51.4%
	Healthy	37	35.2%
	Tasty	44	41.9%
	Unique Drinks	33	31.4%
	Good Environment	5	4.8%
	Good Service	16	15.2%
	Reasonable Price		
Customers' Recommendation to Improve Their Satisfaction	All above	48	45.0%
		16	15.0%
	Reduce the price	10	10.0%
	Promotion	2	2.0%
	Improve customer service	3	3.0%
	Open more stores	10	10.0%
	Improve interior design	16	15.0%
	Others		
	No		

The survey was answered by 105 respondents consisting of 71.4% females and 28.6% male. Most of them were between 20 to 29 years old. By occupation, the majority of respondents (89.5%) were students.

Table 1 also shows that 89.5% of the respondents have already heard of Starbucks Coffee before. Based on the data, Starbucks has successfully gained attraction and attention from the majority of people.

A total of 61% of respondents got the information about Starbucks Coffee's products from their friends, family members and colleagues. Besides, 31.4of the respondents knew Starbucks Coffee from social media such as Facebook and Instagram. This implies that friends, family members, and colleagues play major role in sharing the information about Starbucks Coffee.

According to the results of the survey, 33.3% of the respondents favorite Starbucks' coffee, 26.7% of the respondents like its Frappuccino. This illustrates that to increase customers' satisfaction, Starbucks Coffee should come out with the new flavor of coffee and Frappuccino.
Most of the respondents (39%) are moderately likely to recommend Starbucks coffee to their friends or colleagues, while 23.8% of the respondents strongly will recommend to their friends or colleagues. However, 10.5% of the respondents, will not recommend Starbucks products to their friends.

Furthermore, we found out that 29.5% of the respondents are very satisfied with the overall performance of Starbucks and 37.1% of the respondents are satisfied with it.

Also, 22% of the respondents were neutral, and only 5.7% of them are dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with the overall performance of Starbucks. The results clearly indicate that Starbucks is doing great to fulfil customers' needs.

The results of the survey also shows that 39% of the respondents agreed that the price of Starbucks beverages is extremely expensive. Similarly, 37% of the respondents also think that the price is expensive. However, 20% of them were neutral while only 4.0% of the respondents think that the price is very cheap. This leads to a conclusion that there is a need to reduce the price so that the customers can enjoy the beverages at a more reasonable price.

Moreover, the results of the survey shows that 42.9% of respondents are very satisfied with the quality of Starbucks Coffee while 31.4% of the respondents are satisfied with it. We can conclude that the quality of Starbucks Coffee has obtained their customers' satisfaction and Starbucks should maintain its quality to satisfy customers' needs in the future.

Table 1 also illustrates that 44 respondents (41.9%) were satisfied with Starbucks customer service, 38 respondents (36.2%) are very satisfied with the service provided. This shows that the majority of customers are satisfied with Starbucks customer service. Addedly, 38.1% respondents changed their perception of Starbucks to be more favorable in the past three months. Only 19% out of 105 respondents have changed their perceptions to be extremely favorable and 31.4% of them have neutral opinions. The respondents with a lower interest in Starbucks in the past few months occupy 11.4% of the total respondents.

Besides, 13% of the respondents think that Starbucks very often does promotion while 25.7% of believed that Starbucks often does promotion. Most of them (40%) were neutral. However, 15 respondents (14.3%) and 8 respondents (7.6%) agreed that Starbucks Coffee rarely and very rarely does promotion.

By the frequency of customers purchasing Starbucks Coffee's product, 53.3% of the respondents rarely buy bought Starbucks' product while 16.2% of them have never purchase Starbucks' product. Additionally, 4.8% and 6.7% of the respondents buy Starbucks' product once a week and two or three times in a week respectively. Similarly, 10.5% and 8.6% of them buy Starbucks' product once in a month and two or three times in a month respectively. However, none of them will buy Starbucks' product every day.

In addition, the survey shows that 51.4% of the respondents love Starbucks dine in and 25.7% of them love all Starbucks services (dine in, drive-thru and online ordering apps). This indicates that most of the customers were quite satisfied with all options provided and most of them prefer to dine in.

The survey also shows that "Tasty" (51.4%) is the most chosen factor that attracts customers to buy Starbucks coffee's product. The second highest chosen factor is "Good Environment" (41.9%), followed by unique drink (35.2%) and good service (31.4%). This signifies that tasty and unique beverages, good environment and service satisfying the customers' needs are the factors that keep the customers' loyalty to Starbucks.

For improving Starbucks customer satisfaction, the respondents have provided several recommendations. Among the price reduction, promotions, improved customer service,

more store availability, special interior design and others, 45% of the respondents pointed the price reduction since most of the people or students cannot afford Starbucks beverages. A total of 15% of the respondents suggest Starbucks have more promotion such as special promotion for students. This concludes that price is the most common issue for the people not buying Starbucks products.

Based on the result presented in Table 1, as most of our respondents are students, they thought that the price of beverages in Starbucks is extremely expensive, and this might be the reason more than half of the respondents rarely purchase Starbucks products. Therefore, affordable price should be Starbucks major consideration to attract low-income group of customers.

Moreover, Starbucks Coffee can do more promotion to attract customers, such as Buy 1 Free 1 at a certain period of time. Also, they can do promotion specialized for students. For instance, when students show their student cards, they get 15% off from the total amount. This could attract more customers as recently youngsters like to hang out with friends after their class. They will usually choose some coffee shops they could afford.

India has a total area of 38287 million km². Currently, there are 191 Starbucks stores in India and there are many potential markets to be explored. Starbucks should focus on expanding its market by opening more new stores in cities such as Nashik. For example, Starbucks owns up to 300 stores in Malaysia in November 2019. Compared to countries like Malaysia, India has a larger area for the company to expand its market. With that, Starbucks should choose more strategic locations to expand its potential markets in the respective country. This will make more local people are able to access Starbucks and enjoy the services. This also could improve their brand image as more residents recognize this brand not only by advertisement but also by their own experiences.

Additionally, Starbucks should open stores with unique interior designs or with elements that are different from the other stores. They can be unique from the menu perspective or from the design of the building. This could attract travelers and youngsters who like to check in themselves at unique cafe shops. Besides that, it is significant to create a relaxing and enjoyable environment that matches the lifestyle that the brand promotes. This idea is suggested to correlate with the survey that shows a good environment is one of the important factors that attracts customers to buy Starbucks' products. It is believed that Starbucks is able to kill two birds with one stone if it opens more stores with unique elements in other locations in India.

Professional training and workshops should be continuously provided to ensure the quality of front-desk customer service in Starbucks. Customers stress on the quality of service when they relate their satisfaction with a certain brand. Most of the Starbucks customers chose to dine in and enjoy their meal in the shop. They focus on the buying experience other than the taste of food. Therefore, employee training plays an important role as it provides the employee with the correct way to serve the customers and improve their skills in making food and beverages. For instance, a customer will leave a good impression on a shop when they have employees with a good attitude. It is proved that a good impression from customers will lead to higher customer satisfaction and thus increasing the loyalty of the customer.

Starbucks Coffee has been using a value-based pricing strategy to maximize their profit. It is also called customer-based pricing as the price is set on how much of the target

consumers believe it is worth. Starbucks uses this strategy because they can set higher prices compared to the competitors which they believe their customers are willing to pay for. Starbucks Coffee is confident that the unique products and services provided satisfy their customers and make them loyal to the brand. However, Starbucks Coffee is suggested to reduce the price of their products as there are some consumers who complained about the expensive Starbucks menu prices. Price reduction may attract more customers to try Starbucks Coffee, yet there is a risk to do so. For Starbucks' loyal customers, value matters more than the price. A sudden reduction in price will affect their perception of Starbucks as a high-quality brand that provides premium products and services. Starbucks which is often graded as a premium and high-class coffee brand could not afford to risk the brand being perceived as a low-quality brand which will affect the loyalty of customers. There is a risk of losing more loyal customers than having a chance of gaining new customers if Starbucks reduces the price.

Some customers complained that Starbucks Coffee's stores are far away from their living area and it takes a long time for them to buy a cup of coffee or having difficulties to have a relaxing time with their family and friends at the stores. To solve this problem and increase customer satisfaction, we suggest opening more Starbucks Coffee's stores in every area in India to expand the business. This is because it is necessary to satisfy the huge demands as India is a country with a vast population. However, there is a risk to open more stores as it could make the operating cost higher decreasing the profit. Starbucks Coffee needs to pay a lot of fees such as construction fees, maintenance fees, utility fees, and labor fees. Cost is an important factor that needs to be considered when opening more stores.

CONCLUSIONS

This research investigated individuals' perception and satisfaction in delivering the brand (Starbucks) influence and service quality that is directly connected with customers' loyalty. This study has a great emphasis on the corporate brand image of Starbucks which may affect customer satisfaction. Therefore, with respect to this research, it is clearly defined that Starbucks needs to be more focused on some issues with the purpose of building a strong everlasting relationship with the customers and mutually profitable relationship in the market. Customer satisfaction is described as a variable that indicates how good their brand experience is. Starbucks, which is recognized to be the world's reputed brand, has a definite standard to increase their service quality, brand image and individual satisfaction. By conducting regular surveys to get to know more about customers, Starbucks can fulfill their needs that change from time to time and this will increase customer satisfaction in the future.

As if we contrast with other techniques, we believe that our method of doing analysis is more appropriate for our decision making. At some time, we can state that customers can be convinced by the quality of product, and the customer service provided by the company. From the survey we did, we found that most of the customers are satisfied with the quality of product and customer services provided by Starbucks. However, some of them are not satisfied with the price as it is too expensive, Starbucks, thereby, should maintain its product quality with reasonable prices to attract more customers.

There are several alternatives the researchers provided to improve Starbucks services and gain more customers based on the survey. Starbucks should do more promotion and reduce the pricing to attract more customers from different classes. Subsequently,

to expand their markets and reach out more customers, Starbucks is suggested to expand their stores in more strategic areas. Besides, special stores with unique interior designs can pique the interest of more customers as well. Starbucks also needs to provide professional training to their employees to serve the customer better and therefore improving customer satisfaction. In conclusion, Starbucks has to be innovative in ideas and also focus on quality control and beware of risk that could happen to achieve their-long term targets and grow the company.

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