The Recently University Graduated Employees' Experience with the Starbucks Brand in Thailand

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Jaruwan Thanasupanuvech (wan)
Abstract

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Title: The Recently University Graduated Employees’ Experience with the Starbucks Brand in Thailand.

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Strategic Question: How Starbucks should improve coffee business in order to reach more the recently university graduated employees in Thailand?

Research Question: How the positive and negative experience of the recently university graduated employees with Starbucks brand in term of total perceived quality and sensory system?

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to study the recently university graduated employees’ experience in Thailand by using total perceived quality and sensory system as the criteria to measure.

Method: This research is mainly based on qualitative approach using interview method as primary data. The interview questions were designed and distributed to people in three channels; Starbucks Facebook, Skype, and Pantip FriendFlock, whereas, secondary data came from company website, literature books, and university database.
**Conclusion:** Most of the recently university graduated employees who are Starbucks consumers are coffee-oriented which means that their experiences based on the physical and emotional elements. Starbucks uses the strong elements to create and improve its products and services, for example; quality of raw materials which its consumers can touch by tasting, healthy products and modern packaging can perceive by using their vision. Luxury atmosphere, good service mind, and aroma therapy in the store can, furthermore, imply to consumers’ emotion

**Keywords:** Recently university graduated employees’ experience, Total perceived quality, Sensory system, Starbucks in Thailand
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1 Introduction

Since Thailand has opened relations with western countries, the culture of coffee drinking was spread into Thai society, especially, the high class people of Thai society, after that passing through the middle class people and then spreading to all over the population finally (Suksringam, n.d.). In the urban home, there is usually coffee with the breakfast while most of offices usually have a coffee place as the extra service to all employees.

There are many premium coffee shop rapidly growing up in Thai marketplace during the recently years. Starbucks is one of them, furnished itself with varieties of social meaning and value by using marketing activities to make its brand become differentiated among other competitors. Most of Starbucks consumers nowadays are the middle class with well-educated people (Ratjaroenkhajorn, 2001). They perceive Starbucks as the premium brand by using their five senses – vision, sound, touch, taste, and smell – to judge Starbucks’ products and services quality. These five senses are basic elements in process of perception what products or services can cause a positive or negative experience to their mind. Starbucks image among consumers’ mind is, therefore; good atmosphere, high quality of coffee, and good service from Starbucks staff. All of these are the strong functions creating the consumers’ positive experience with the Starbucks.

To increase the sales volume and compete with other competitors, the expansion of target group should be updated all the times. The recently university graduated employees is the one of interesting target group Starbucks should focus as there are many reasons behind, for example; they have their own salary and also stay in working society which needs the adaptation to be the same as others in same organization. Moreover, this group tends to have more purchasing power in the future and also can generate a lot of incomes to Starbucks in long term.

1 Recently university graduated employee means; one who received an academic degree and just become the employee (adjusted from thefreedictionary, 2010). The scope in this research is focused on employee who has age 22-25 years old and finished undergraduate.
1.1 Problem Statement

*Consumer Experience* is more values for all companies in order to play attention to because the concept of consumer experience can help company understand how to combine people’s feeling and psychology into the making of products or services (Nagasawa, 2008).

Starbucks, the first international coffee brand in Thai consumer’s mind, has to learn and understand more what its consumer experiences are in order to adjust and put those experiences into its products such as coffee and services such as atmosphere in its stores. Furthermore, Starbucks should also focus on point of sense perception as it is one step back before causing to consumer experience. Vision is what consumers can see from, for example, raw materials and packaging. Sound can be music opening inside a store which builds consumers’ relaxing emotion. Touch and taste are what consumer can feel by using hands or mouth at least. Finally, smell can be aroma therapy of coffee which creates a romantic, relaxing, and fresh emotion to consumers.

The reason why study in this topic is very important is after knowing the positive and negative experience of the recently university graduated employees, Starbucks will realize how to improve its coffee and other services to reach more the recently university graduated employees – potential target group – in Thailand as the one way to expand its market share in Thai coffee marketplace.

1.2 Research Question

The objective of this research shown as following:

“How the positive and negative experience of the recently university graduated employees with Starbucks brand in term of total perceived quality and sensory system?”

1.3 Benefits of This Research

The results of this research are expected to have important implications for both business sectors and researchers. By contributing to understanding of total perceived
quality and sensory system which can influence on consumer experience to coffee’s brand in Thai marketplace. This research should, moreover, act as roadmap for Starbucks in assessing its products or services towards consumer experience in order to reach more target market, and also acting as guideline for other coffee business sectors which are interested in developing their business to create positive experience in consumers’ mind.

1.4 Type of Consumer in Coffee Industry

The coffee industry is not only interesting but it also offers many challenges as it has become more competitors nowadays (Jong Joo, et al., 2009). According to Slywotzky (1995 cited in Wines, 1995, p. 55-57) stated that, all businesses have changed a lots because of competitors. They have to create their own design based on new assumption, for example, the differentiation and go-to-market mechanisms can help businesses increase their value. Starbucks as well has created its own culture and a loyal customer base. 

A study of Suchard (1993 cited in Emerald British Food Journal, 2002, p. 420-421) shows that there are four types of consumers in area of coffee:

1.4.1 Coffee-Oriented Consumers: Those who play more importance on the stimulating effects of coffee. It means that their experience is mainly based on physical and psychic elements.

1.4.2 Ritual Consumers: They show the energetic value of coffee, therefore, the usual consumption is normal. It implies that the cup in their opinion looks like the symbol of recurrence of daily rhythms.

1.4.3 Health-Conscious Consumers: These types of consumers are characterized by the tendency to moderate the coffee of their consumption. Their behavior shows towards normal to decaffeinated coffee.

http://www.starbucks.com/about-us/company-information
1.4.4 **Problematic Consumers:** This group of consumers has extremely negative feeling towards normal coffee consumption. They prefer instant coffee than others.

Anon (2002) mentioned that if the company’s products can serve all groups then its brand has a chance to become the first choice in customers’ mind. Moreover, to have a good image and a strong presence of its brand, advertising campaign such as promotion are useful to mark the brand to be more differentiated among competitors.
2 Theoretical Frameworks

This part presents a framework of theoretical references which is considered to be a tool for the analysis of research question. I, therefore, start with the conceptual framework model to give a clear picture of this research. Then “Total perceived quality” and “Sensory system” are identified to understand consumer experience.

2.1 The Conceptual Framework Model

The conceptual framework used in this research is to examine the factors which influence on considering variable which is consumer experience with the Starbucks.

2.1.1 Background Factors

According to Figure 2.1, it shows the independent variables which are consumer demographics. Demographics are the factors which directly express consumer’s characteristic (see in 2.3 Demographic Variables, Appendix 2, and Appendix 4 part 1).

Total Perceived Quality is the main model which can be separated into two sides. Firstly, the left hand side shows the Expected Quality having factors such as marketing communication, sales, and image as the causes to build Expected Quality occurred. For the right hand side, it shows Experienced Quality which is driven from two factors, Technical and Functional Quality. Under these two factors, it also has the sense perception as ongoing process to create what and how through five senses – vision, sound, touch, taste, and smell.
2.2 Total Perceived Quality

*Total Perceived Quality* is the method to measure the service quality by comparing between consumer’s internal perception which is referred to experience in the conceptual framework model, and consumer’s expectation (Gronroos, 2007, p. 76).

If expectation > experience, then the perceived service quality is low;
If expectation < experience, then the perceived service quality is high

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*Figure 2.1: The Conceptual Framework Model*
*Source: Adjusted from Gronroos, C., 2007*
When the perceived service quality is low, the negative image occurs. On the other hand, if the perceived service quality is high, it means that consumers satisfy with the service and the positive image occurring.

Starbucks’ mission statement shows “To establish Starbucks as the premier purveyor of the finest coffee in the world while maintaining our uncompromising principles as we grow” (Welsh et al., 1998). Its main principles are treating consumers with buying the best available coffees and developing normal consumers to become loyal consumers.

2.2.1 Expected Quality

*Consumer expectation* is the feeling of consumer towards something on products or services in advance. Consumers have some expectation what product or service should have or should be, and also hope to get the product or service same as last time if they have ever used it before. The expected quality is driven from factors namely marketing communication, word of month, company/local image, price, consumer needs and values (Gronroos, 2007, p. 76).

The reason why consumers are willing to pay the higher price for a cup of Starbucks coffee is they expect to get a positive experience, a lifestyle, and an attitude (Far Eastern Economic Review, n.d. cited in Anon, 2004, p. 13-15; and Duffy, 2003, p. 482-483).

Many people believe that Starbucks focuses on freshness, quality of coffee beans, and all making processes in order to delivery the best coffee into consumers’ hand (Welsh et al., 1998). Schultz, chairman-president-CEO of Starbucks, states on his book that “The entire Starbucks’ experience provide human connection and personal enrichment in cherished moments around the world, one cup at a time” (Schultz and Yang, 1997 cited in Rippin, 2007, p. 145) which is one way of marketing communication affected on consumer expectation. Moreover, Simmons (2004 cited in Rippin, 2007, p. 145) mentioned that “Starbucks is a great place to go if you want to be left alone” because the coffee drinkers can get the luxury and romance space, furthermore, they can travel the world without ever leaving home or at least leaving the Third Place (see more in appendix 1). This can imply as word of mouth and image to consumers. However,
image under the expected quality also includes a consumer’s prior experiences. Auge (1995 cited in Rippin, 2007, p. 146) also defined the consumer’s prior experiences by giving example; Starbucks’ consumers have their strong spirit with Starbucks’ place and activities through its coffee label.

2.2.2 Experienced Quality

Experiences include as private intangible events that occur in response to some motivation before and after purchase (Nagasawa, 2008). The work of Gilmore & Pine (2002) mentioned that experiences make emotional connections and, moreover, they are more powerful than most of marketing messages.

Customer experience defines the value of something that impresses and appeals to the people’s senses, also involving the senses and impressions of the user, for example; what the customer actually feels and is impressed with when coming into contact with a company and a brand (Nagasawa, 2008).

Gronroos (1982; 1990 cited in Kang, 2006, p. 37 and also cited in Kang & James, 2004, p. 266-267) defined the quality of a service as perceived by consumers. There are two dimensions (shown in conceptual framework model above): a functional (or process) dimension and a technical (or outcome) dimension. Functional quality focuses on “how” in scope of; the behavior of consumer contact staff, and the speed of service, while, technical quality focuses on “what” in scope of the end result of service provision.

2.2.2.1 Technical Quality: what a consumer receives from a service or a service encounter. The example as the following:

- Starbucks’ consumers get more health benefits from coffee because Starbucks concerns about consumers’ health by eliminating growth hormone containing milk from its menu (FinancialWire, 2007 cited in Marques, 2008, p. 254).

2.2.2.2 Functional Quality: the way a service is delivered to a consumer. The example as the following:
2.3 Demographic Variables

Consumer demographics are important for marketers because those factors can help marketers understand the characteristics of consumer clearly (Evans, et al., 2006, p. 106) in order to segment a large market into subgroups (Pol, 1986) and provide the direct solution to their target consumers.

McCarthy (1981 cited in Lin, 2002, p. 249-250) also supported the purpose of market segmentation into two-fold: to divide a market into several homogeneous sub-markets and to formulate a proper marketing-mix strategy for sub-market by using such as gender, age, income, education, and occupation in term of segmentation variables.

Nevertheless, the following descriptions are gender and income only because I chose the recently university graduated employee as my main target group, therefore, this group can imply through age, education, and occupation at the same time (see more in appendix 2).

2.3.1 Gender

All people have their own characteristics to differ from others in both internal and external side, same as gender as well. Markus et al., (1982 cited in Hogg and Garrow, 2003, p. 160) stated that “information processing consequences of self-schemas about gender”. It can imply that female and male have different aspects in term of accepting and learning process, attitude, and value.

The top product categories for gender targeting are very similar excepting coffee product. The top 20 categories for women have coffee as 0.5% female targeted while no coffee percentage showed in the top 20 categories for male at all (Business Insights, 2005). It shows that genders are one factor which affect on decision making of buying products to fulfill their need (see more in appendix 3).
Therefore, marketers must clearly classify the target products and services in order to answer the direct consumers’ requirement (Evans, et al., 2006, p. 119).

### 2.3.2 Income

Economic circumstances have an effect on consumers’ buying or decision making behavior (Evans, et al., 2006, p. 124). These circumstances included income, saving rate, interest rate, debt and, moreover, attitude between expenditure and saving.

The global financial crisis which hit the market during this time has prevented the growth of premium product brands. According to declining incomes and declining consumer confidence, people’s going-out spending has fallen. In effect, most people have adjusted their behavior by perception themselves as poorer (Pastre & Band, 2010).

Therefore, during recession period people have less income marketers should adapt the product’s design or changing prices according to consumers in each circumstance (Pastre & Band, 2010).

### 2.4 Sense Perception

Lindstrom (2005) asserted that “Almost our entire understanding of the world is experienced through our senses. Our senses are our link to memory and can tap right into emotion”. Evans, et al. (2006, p. 38) also defined the sense perception as consciousness of environmental surrounding which consumers can perceive through their five senses. This can imply that the simple activity which motivates the consumer experience on decision making process is senses.

Schultz, chairman-president-CEO of Starbucks, mentioned that; he would like to take old, tired, and common coffee showing to his consumers which can show a sense of romance and community around it. Moreover, consumers are enchanted by atmosphere of sophistication and style and knowledge which passing through consumers’ five senses (Schultz and Yang, 1997 cited in Rippin, 2007, p. 142).
To make the brand, logo and name, becomes more recognizable; all elements which are picked up by senses colors, pictures, design, sound, taste must be fully integrated (Lindstrom, 2005).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceiving Through</th>
<th>Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vision</strong></td>
<td>Use of color, pack/product/logo designs are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sound</strong></td>
<td>Music sound tracks to TV advertisement can affect how the advertising message itself is interpreted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Touch</strong></td>
<td>Not well researched, consumers like to touch products if they can. This can create positive for on-line marketers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taste</strong></td>
<td>Blind tests show importance of brand image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Smell</strong></td>
<td>Aroma (synthetic or real); palm trees in travel agents to conjure up nostalgic memories of holidays in warm climates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Perception and the Use of Senses  
Source: Adjusted from Evans, et al., 2006

Starbucks is designed on the music, colors, lighting, décor, and coffee aroma around its consumer needs. Research by Nespresso found out that 60 percent of sensory experience of drinking espresso coming from the environment in the store (Soars, 2009).

2.4.1 Vision

The different colors can influence on different values (Evans, et al., 2006, p. 33). Red/green/blue color shows the values of low-energy lighting provides a host of low-cost which can create any shade on the color spectrum, while, yellow means warmth, novelty and caution which is the first color the human eye notices (Soars, 2009). For example, the colorful packaging can invite consumers to pick a product up by using shape, texture, and visual components (Blake, 2006).
2.4.2 Sound

In term of atmospheres, sound is one factor marketers use to influence consumers’ responses on in-store environments. The pleasant sound can create positive emotion for the consumers and also encourage sales (Evans, et al., 2006, p. 39).

Starbucks offers the custom music CDs provided in the store which can make the good experience to its consumers (Anon, 2004).

2.4.3 Touch

Underhill (1999, p. 162) stated that the consumers want to have experience before making decision to buy something. Therefore, touch can influence customers to truly feel with the product.

2.4.4 Taste

Underhill (1999, p. 168) mentioned that taste and touch are similar factor which can encourage consumers to buy the product more. Pastre & Band (2010) also supported that, taste is a major attribute which drives consumers to purchase the specific drinking and also making the products become more differentiated.

2.4.5 Smell

Lindstrom (2005) realized that the popping of the popcorn occurs, not only to create product to sell, but also to create a unique consumer experience, using the sense of smell. Evans, et al. (2006, p. 39) also gave some example about how the smell can affect to consumer perception. The smell of bread baking in store implied to freshness of bakery.
3 Methodology

“If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it” (Abraham Lincoln). Therefore, this part addresses the research methodology used in conducting the research question. It explains the research instrument used to collect the data in primary and secondary data, sample size, sampling method, interview format, and also shows plan of data analysis.

3.1 Data Collection

I decided to collect data from both primary and secondary data. Figure 3.1 shows my data collection process which describes information sources.

![Data Collection Diagram](Image)

**Figure 3.1: Data Collection and Information Sources**

*Source: The Author*

3.1.1 Primary Data

According to Fisher (2007, p. 159), qualitative approach may use the method as interviews in order to collect data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured</td>
<td>Semi-Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth and Open</td>
<td>Some Guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Unstructured and Semi-Structured Approaches to the Main Research Methods

Source: Adjusted from Fisher, C., 2007

I used semi-structure interview as method of my thesis because I started to ask interview question in-depth and open first, but sometimes my target consumers do not have any ideas to give me the answer, therefore, I have to give them some guidelines.

In this research, primary data is collected through online interview via Starbucks Facebook[^3^], Skype, and Pantip Friend Flock[^4^].

### 3.1.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data is data which has already published for purposes rather than the specific need at hand. In this research, secondary data is collected from internal and external sources. Internal data is available from the company website[^5^]. The external data comes from an array of sources, for example; internet, literature books, journals and articles in Malardalen University’s database[^6^] such as Business insights, and Emerald.

### 3.2 Sample Size

I used three channels; Starbucks Facebook, Skype, and Pantip FriendFlock, to collect 60 people as the online interview data in this research. Firstly, the total Starbucks Facebook’s members are 43,446 people (June 11, 2010 @ 10.01 p.m. Sweden time). The respondents (n = 30; age = 22-25; female = 15; male = 15; education = undergraduate; occupation = employee) were asked to complete the interview question. Secondly, I chose 10 out of 20 people from my Skype connection in the conditions (n =

[^3^]: http://www.facebook.com/StarbucksThailand
[^6^]: http://mdh.se/library/search/databasesindexpage
10; age = 22-25; female = 7; male = 3; education = undergraduate; occupation = employee). Finally, 20 respondents from Pantip FriendFlock in the conditions (n = 20; age = 22-25; female = 10; male = 10; education = undergraduate; occupation = employee) were also used to complete this interview question.

3.3 Sampling

In this research, non-probability (nonrandom) sampling method was used in order to collect data under the limited time and budget condition. Nonrandom sampling is a type of sampling in which the target population has unequal chance of being chosen for inclusion in the sample - there are two types of nonrandom sampling, convenience and purposive sampling (Kazmier, 2003, p. 4).

A convenience sample has the meaning including the most easily accessible measurements or observations (Kazmier, 2003, p. 4), while, a purposive sampling is a grand way to collect data from sample who can obtain access or whoever having appropriation for the questions (Fisher, 2007, p. 191).

Under the collecting data through “Starbucks Facebook” the purposive sampling was applied. Meanwhile, “Skype” and “Pantip FriendFlock” were collected data by using the convenience sampling method.

3.4 Interview Format

Interview is method to collect data which is useful for getting, especially, the story behind a respondent’s experiences. The interviewer can, furthermore, get the in-depth information around the topic (Fisher, 2007, p. 167).

The conversational interview was conducted in this research in order to make the respondents feel informal and relax. Moreover, to do the conversation like friend talking to friend can help in collecting data process get more information than using formal interview.
3.5 Data Analysis

There are 27 questions in these interview questions which divided into two parts in order to gather information about consumer demographics (Part 1) and, moreover, in order to understand what consumers perceive the quality of product and service by using five senses (Part 2) in process of receiving all details.

Part 1: Demographics

The interview question started from the general information about the consumer first because these questions (see in appendix 4; part 1, and question no. 1-5) show consumer demographics in gender, age, education, occupation, and income. All these factors are independent variables which are the cause of the difference in each consumer towards their experience or perception.

Part 2: Total Perceived Quality and Sense Perception

This part can divided into five sub-topics which are; expected quality, factors causing expectation, experienced quality, technical quality with sensory system, and functional quality with sensory system.

The questions in expected quality show what the consumers expect about “coffee, service, atmosphere, and their emotion” before they going to Starbucks store every time. These are the open interview in order to get more information from consumers’ expectation (see in appendix 4; part 2, sub-topic of expected quality, and question no. 6-9).

Factors causing expectation’s questions ask about the impact of marketing activities such as advertisement, statement or slogan, and promotion which Starbucks uses with consumer expectation (see in appendix 4; part 2, sub-topic of factors causing expectation, and question no. 10-12).

After the expectations were asked, then the experience must be the next topic in order to know what is the consumer experience after they come to use the products or
services in Starbucks store such as the quality of Starbucks coffee, the service from Starbucks staff, or the atmosphere inside the store (see in appendix 4; part 2, sub-topic of experienced quality, and question no. 13-19).

The questions in technical quality with sensory system ask about the consumer thinking towards Starbucks’ products by using five senses in judgment (see in appendix 4; part 2, sub-topic of technical quality with sensory system, and question no. 20-22).

Finally, functional quality with sensory system’s questions ask about the consumer thinking towards Starbucks’ services such as music inside its store, color and light, or pictures on the wall by using five senses in judgment (see in appendix 4; part 2, sub-topic of functional quality with sensory system, and question no. 23-27).
4 Finding and Analysis

There are many ways to success in business. Many businesses focus on price and convenience to attract their consumers by using goods and services as a commodity without fuss or feeling from consumers. Nevertheless, to become differentiate among other competitors consumer experience must be applied. In this part finding and analysis can tell the readers more realizing; products and services can do more than a usual commodity if seeking to connect in personal and meaningful ways with the consumers.

4.1 Total Perceived Quality

Total Perceived Quality is divided into five topics based on this finding and analysis part. The gender and income are sub-topic in order to understand more how the difference in genders and income can influence on consumer expectation and experience. Moreover, the positive and negative experiences are described under experienced, technical, and functional quality in order to get the clear picture of consumers’ overview towards Starbucks.

4.1.1 Expected Quality

In this topic to find out the consumer expectation on Starbucks coffee, service, atmosphere, and consumer emotion before going to Starbucks store every time. Furthermore, marketing activities are also focused in order to find the impact of these towards consumer expectation.

4.1.1.1 Considering Gender and Income

Most consumers have less difference in their expectation with the Starbucks by using genders and income as criteria. They trust in Starbucks because they believe that Starbucks will use the good quality of raw materials provided with a variety of coffee options. They also believe that Starbucks cares in all processes of choosing its coffee bean. Moreover, Starbucks coffee makers (barista) are professional in their field, therefore, these can make them be more assured of the quality of Starbucks coffee.
They said that, every time they want or think of high quality of coffee Starbucks comes in first ranking in their mind.

As they perceive Starbucks is the premium coffee brand due to Starbucks image and their past experience, they expect to get high quality in everything, especially, services and atmosphere in its store. They hope the staff should have a good service mind and should make them feel more comfortable such as talking with them in a friendly way as they expect before coming to the store. Wi-Fi internet service is one of services they expect from Starbucks, they said that; they want to come to Starbucks and use internet in a store because they felt good and enjoyable due to past experience.

In part of atmosphere, they expect to get the nice atmosphere as a place they can relax, enjoy with their friends, and do their work with their laptop. Atmosphere in Starbucks stores should have a good decoration and be calm. Aroma is, moreover, one of factors they expect to get as it can help them feel more relax and become freshness at the same time.

However, most consumers who were interviewed via Skype and Pantip FriendFlock could not remember Starbucks’ advertisement, slogan, statement, or even its promotion. While, consumers who were interviewed via Starbucks Facebook can remember the Starbucks’ current promotion but some of them still do not know what Starbucks advertisement and slogan are.

There is no difference between genders and income under consumer expectation. Most consumers trust in quality of coffee, services, and atmosphere Starbucks provides for them. Past experiences play more important factor because they have already had experience with Starbucks before, therefore, before going to Starbucks every time they expect to get the same standard or higher than the previous.

4.1.2 Experienced Quality

The main point of this topic is what consumers think about the Starbucks after they have experiences.
4.1.2.1 Considering Gender

4.1.2.1.1 Positive

Both males and females have the same perception in quality of Starbucks coffee. They perceive that Starbucks is concerning about its quality of raw materials than other brands. When they order Starbucks coffee, they can see the way of barista making their coffee and, moreover, they can see the brands of material products behind the coffee shelf. However, most females concern more about their health; Starbucks realizes in this point, therefore, non fat milk is created to answer the consumers’ need. Furthermore, there are the healthy products on sale in Starbucks shelf such as the low sugar syrup and brown bread sandwiches. These options make females more satisfy with Starbucks coffee.

They said that; every time they come to Starbucks store they get the good service from staff, for example, when they have question about how difference of products in menu staff is willing to answer with smile and polite way. Moreover, when there is new promotion staff always informs to consumers which is the benefit point makes consumers feel positive way to Starbucks service.

The consumers give the comment that they feel relaxing and luxurious because of the atmosphere inside a store which shows the rest area, meeting point, unique, and enjoyable place with their friends. The smell of coffee also makes the atmosphere inside a store become more relaxing and freshness same as the aroma therapy. Furthermore, the comfortable seats are the wonderful experience consumers perceive according to Starbucks provides in the highest level among its competitors. They really love it.

4.1.2.1.2 Negative

Most female consumers complain some points of Starbucks’ product, service, and atmosphere. They need to repeat their order several times in order to get a cup of coffee. Moreover, whenever there are many consumers waiting in line, the quality of coffee somehow drops such as frappes melt. In point of atmosphere, females also
complain that atmosphere is not as good in some branches due to there is no wall or partition separating the store from the public area.

Most male consumers said that; internet is the most important part that makes them come to this store but the Wi-Fi internet service is quite slow when comparing to normal access during this time. They like this service but they do not like the speed of the service. They prefer to use in hi-speed among good surrounding which means properly groups of people, good smelling from coffee aroma, and good seat.

Both males and females complain in the same way about the number of seats provided in a store. They said they want to come and sit inside a store but sometimes there are no any seats available for them. If they want to have some seats they must come to the store earlier or in the early morning.

4.1.2.2 Considering Income

There is no significant difference between incomes level under experienced quality because most consumers’ level perceive in the similar experience.

Difference in genders makes the difference in experience as shown above. Gender criteria plays more important role on how males and females’ experienced quality looks like, whereas, income levels are no significant difference towards consumers’ experienced quality.

In the general, most of consumers have the positive experienced quality with the Starbucks, for example, they understand Starbucks more concerning about the quality of raw materials on all processes in order to make a cup of coffee. Services stay in high position of consumers’ mind such as nice talking from staff and providing updated information in order to make consumers get more benefits. Atmosphere is, moreover, the wonderful place where consumers can be more relaxing, freshness, enjoyment, and working at the same place.

However, there are some weak points which make consumers have negative experienced quality, in the case of managing queue line and quality of coffee during
peak time. Furthermore, a number of seats also deal as big issue towards consumers’
experienced quality because seats are one of the important atmospheres provided by
Starbucks. This might be an effect on the consumers who want just a cup of coffee
switching to buy other brands.

4.1.3 Technical Quality

The main point of this topic is what consumers think about the Starbucks products after
they have experiences.

4.1.3.1 Considering Gender

4.1.3.1.1 Positive

All consumers have the same opinion on Starbucks products’ packaging which shows
modern and fashionable style. Nevertheless, most females can see through the color of
Starbucks’ packaging as it uses mostly brown color paper. They feel that Starbucks is
really concerned about the natural resources that affect to their health.

Female consumers perceive Starbucks coffee is the best of the best coffee in Thailand
in the case of taste as there are many varieties of choices to choose and, especially, mild
and flavorful taste. The flavor is unique yet it is not too strong and also making a
wonderful cup to start the working day.

Both males and females agree in the same way about smell of Starbucks coffee which
provides the wonderful feeling of warmth, relaxing, and freshness. They said; coffee is
one part of their life. If they could not drink or consume the real coffee the smell of
coffee can also be the aroma therapy for them instead of the touchable coffee.
Moreover, there are many times that they walk pass Starbucks store without any feeling
to get a cup of coffee but because of coffee’s smell, they feel more craving to drink and
then motivating them to buy Starbucks coffee finally.
4.1.3.1.2 Negative

Some male consumers give the comment on taste of Starbucks coffee which is quite similar to other brands, especially, Starbucks’ black coffee. There is no difference on taste but only the smell which is the different point. They said; Starbucks should not put more sweetening because what the consumers’ want from black coffee is original taste.

4.1.3.2 Considering Income

Consumers who have income in third levels (more than 20,000 Bht per month, see more in appendix 4; part 1, and question no. 5) concern more about Starbucks products’ packaging. When they consume any Starbucks products in a store or outside a store but holding Starbucks packaging in their hand, they feel like they are the special person – not just the normal person in society. They are proud and confident in themselves when other people look at them because it seems like they are good looking, high income, and rich.

However, there is still no significant difference between incomes level under technical quality because most consumer’ levels perceive in the similar experience towards Starbucks products.

Genders make the difference in perception of technical quality. Females perceive the positive technical quality towards Starbucks products through their five senses. They focus more on healthy products which Starbucks can answer the directly solution. However, males have a comment on the taste of Starbucks’ black coffee but for others Starbucks can answer their requirement. Smell of Starbucks coffee is one of the main factors persuading both genders in making decision to buy a cup of coffee. Therefore, smell is the strong point of Starbucks towards consumer experiences under technical quality.

On the other hand, Starbucks products’ packaging is the important thing which consumers who have high income consider the most because there is an effect on their social class.
4.1.4 Functional Quality

The main point of this topic is what consumers think about the Starbucks services or processes which ongoing in the store after they have experiences.

4.1.4.1 Considering Gender

4.1.4.1.1 Positive

All consumers satisfy the atmosphere inside Starbucks store, for example, it uses warm lights to make the environmental surrounding look more romantic, peaceful, and relaxing. Pictures hanging on the wall make them feel calm down, get into the nature, and also make their eyes more relaxing. The color used inside a store make them feel more warm and colorful at the same time. Moreover, most females have a comment on Starbucks atmosphere as the nice place to take a photo with their friend due to good decoration and other elements matched.

Starbucks staff is one factor making atmosphere inside a store more relaxing and enjoyable because staff talks in a friendly way with consumers. When they see staff talking with other consumers they feel like this place is full of love and warmth.

When they enter to a store they feel more relaxing and peaceful due to the music opened in a store such as jazz, blue, and classic. Music and coffee are perfectly matched together. Moreover, the space in a store also supports them get more comfortable to spend time chilling with their friends or working alone.

In case of giving the product trial consumers share their opinion as the good thing Starbucks should do according to price of product is quite high. If they already ordered but finally they found that the taste does not match with their need. It is something like they pay a lot of money without satisfaction in feeling.

Location is one of factor make consumers have positive in Starbucks’ functional quality because Starbucks is always located at the place everyone know where the store is.
4.1.4.1.2 Negative

Some consumers said that; most of Starbucks stores located in business center area. Some weekend or holiday they want to drink and take a rest inside a store they have to go out to supermarket or shopping mall near their house with traffic problems on the way. Therefore, this is inconvenient for them a lot.

4.1.4.2 Considering Income

Most consumers who have a car with income in second and third level (15,001 and over Bht per month, see more in appendix 4; part 1, and question no. 5) complain about the position of Starbucks stores. Most of stores are located at the shopping mall and business center area. Those are a place which is hard to find car park. They have to spend maybe 30 minutes for parking a car in order to get just a cup of coffee.

There is no significant difference between genders and income under functional quality. Atmosphere is the main important factor making consumers satisfy with Starbucks services such as light, picture and music inside a store. This is the strong point of Starbucks which creates differentiate among its competitors. The way of talking of Starbucks staff also supports its atmosphere become more relaxing, warm, enjoyable, and peaceful at the same time. Tasting given can, moreover, help consumers decide whether to try the real products or not before making decision to buy. Therefore, consumers can feel how elegance of Starbucks in their opinion through their five senses – vision, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

4.1.5 Image

The image here occurred from the comparing between expectation and experience by using total perceived quality in judgment. The consumers’ perception is higher than their expectation in many points such as higher perception in Starbucks’ atmosphere and services. It can imply that consumers have more satisfaction with the Starbucks. All of these affect on overall Starbucks’ image. Therefore, the image of Starbucks in consumers’ mind is high in both products and services quality. After that it is easy to
move normal consumers to become Starbucks’ loyalist and also expand in order to reach more target markets.
5 Conclusions

Since Starbucks coffee shop has become well-known among Thai people, it has created the new coffee culture among Thai people about consuming coffee. The Starbucks has become the one of the social lifestyle of consumers in Bangkok. From the interviewers’ information, I can understand the recently university graduated employees’ positive and negative experiences with the Starbucks brand in term of total perceived quality and sensory system. Most of the recently university graduated employees who are Starbucks consumers are coffee-oriented which means that their experiences based on the physical and emotional elements.

Starbucks uses all these strong elements to create and improve its products and services, for example; quality of raw materials which its consumers can touch by tasting, healthy products and modern packaging can perceive by using their vision. Luxury atmosphere, good service mind, and aroma therapy in the store can, furthermore, imply to consumers’ emotion.
Female consumers are more concerning than males about healthy products and services from Starbucks staff. They have high total perceived quality according to having average in expectation while perception in the high experience. However, for the remaining elements have no significant difference in both genders and income.

However, there are some weak points which make the recently university graduated employees have negative experience with the Starbucks.

![Figure 5.2: Negative Experience with the Starbucks](source: The Author)

According to a lot of consumers coming to Starbucks store each day, there is a problem with queue line which makes unsatisfied feeling to consumers. There are limited seats available in a store also making consumers feel inconvenient to find a seat. The difficulty to find a store outside business center area can increase the consumers’ negative experience towards Starbucks finally. Moreover, Low speed in Wi-Fi internet service provided in Starbucks stores leads to most of males’ negative experience.

There are a number of limitations to this research which need to be addressed. This research was conducted within three months which is a limited time to study. Therefore, the specific target group of consumer is needed. The recently university
graduated employees were applied to this research according to high purchasing power mainly reason behind. Similar studies can be expanded into other domains, for example; students in university or senior workers. Potential area for future concerns about target groups who have high purchasing power and modern lifestyle.
6 Recommendations

The best way to improve coffee business in order to reach more the recently university graduated employees in Thailand is Starbucks has to concern its weak points which make consumers’ negative experiences.

As Starbucks plays more attentions on the service in its store, the queue line must be considered more because it shows the convenience to the consumers. Starbucks should manage well in this waiting line – it should understand the consumers’ time and lifestyle. For example, consumers will come more to the store during lunch and evening time then Starbucks should prepare more staffs to work at that time.

To answer the up-to-dated persons during this period, internet is more important. Starbucks provides Wi-Fi internet service for free to all consumers. However, that is not enough because technology changes every day, therefore, the updated speed of Wi-Fi internet service is necessary. A little detail can increase the consumers’ positive experience.

According to Starbucks menus, it is quite hard for new consumers to read and order. Therefore, Starbucks should adjust some points on its menus such as font, color, and pattern in order to give more convenience to both exist and new consumers.

Regarding most consumers complain about Starbucks products’ price, they want Starbucks create new promotion or package for member card. Even Starbucks has good services in store provided to its consumers, most consumers still want Starbucks launch the new product which can attract them to buy more and become Starbucks’ loyalist finally.
7 References


Appendix

Appendix 1: Starbucks in Thailand

Starbucks (Thailand), a wholly owned subsidiary of the Starbucks Corporation, opened the first store in July, 1998\footnote{http://www.starbucks.co.th/en-US/}, which has launched the *Starbucks Experience* to Thai consumers until now.

- *Starbucks Experience*: Starbucks has considered the service as the most importance which makes its consumers feeling good with its coffee.

- *Atmosphere*: The store provides Wi-Fi internet service and comfortable seats for meeting or relaxing to its consumers. Customers can come to enjoy, and have the meeting with their friends. Moreover, Starbucks also creates new parts such as Starbucks Entertainment in order to provide the music therapy by using jazz and blue music inside the store to enhance the coffee atmosphere in its store. These are the ways which make Starbucks become a meeting point for consumers.

- *The Third Place*: Starbucks becomes a linkage place between home and work where you can come and feel more relax. This is the good way to make its consumers feel Starbucks like a home, especially, people who have a free time after work. They are looking for the place to go rather than going back to their home and just watching television.

Appendix 2: Consumer Demographics’ Explanation

Demographics are the factors which directly express consumer’s characteristic. It is very useful information to marketers in order to know their target group well and then creating and launching the effective marketing plan.
Age

Consumers’ buying or decision making behavior will be changed depending on number of years that they have lived since birth. For example, babies need foods which are suitable for their age. When they grow up they can eat almost all kinds of foods. On the other hand, they will need low fat and healthy food during older age. These can be shown as consumption patterns during difference in life cycle stage (Evans, et al., 2006, p. 108-113).

Education

People who get the education in difference of era, education system, and degree of graduation will have difference in attitude, value, and type of needs. They will, therefore, show in different ways of behavior. For example, people who have high education tend to consume high quality of product than people who have low education. Consequently, it is important to marketers in order to know level of their consumers’ education in a particular market (Cateora & Ghauri, 2005, p. 85).

Occupation

Many commercial market research programs have found differences in buying behavior between respondents in the various occupations (Evans, et al., 2006, p. 124-125). Each occupation leads to difference in products and services’ need. It, moreover, reflects the lifestyle patterns of consumers. Marketers must study which occupation is able to match with their company’s products in order to provide the proper marketing activities. For example, businessmen who often go for seminar around the cities have to arrange time well, every minute is more important. If they have meeting in other cities car might not solve their requirement, airline is the best solution according to limited time.

Appendix 3: Gender Described as Masculinity and Femininity

Geert Hofstede has carried out the research which related to cultural dimensions on different societies in different social aspects. His research covers five factors included
power distance index (PDI), individualism (IDV), masculinity (MAS), uncertainty avoidance index (UAI), and long term orientation (LTD).

Figure A: Thailand Cultural Dimensions
Source: Geert Hofstede (itim International)

I focus on masculinity factor only as it related to one of demographic variables, which is gender. This can tell how men in this society are dominant and effect the decision making process. It also refers to the distribution of roles between men and women. The women in feminine countries have the same caring values, and modest as the men. On the other hand, women in the masculine countries they are less assertive and competitive. Therefore, Figure A shows a gap between men's values and women's values in Thailand. Masculinity is 40% which is the lowest when comparing to the Asian average of 53%.

Appendix 4: Interview Question

English version

Hello, I am the postgraduates (Master Degree) at MDH, Sweden in major of international marketing. I am now conducting an interview question of my thesis which

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needs 60 persons from on-line interview. I see your ideas can help me as the potential data. Therefore, I would like to interview you by asking the following questions:

**Part 1: Demographics**

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Education
4. Occupation
5. Income (Bht\(^{10}\) per month)
   - 1) 10,000 – 15,000
   - 2) 15,001 – 20,000
   - 3) more than 20,000

**Part 2: Total Perceived Quality and Sensory System**

**Expected Quality**

6. What do you expect about the *coffee* before going to Starbucks store every time? Why?
7. What do you expect about the *service* before going to Starbucks store every time? Why?
8. What do you expect about the *atmosphere* before going to Starbucks store every time? Why?
9. What do you expect about your *emotion* such as enjoyment or relaxation before going to Starbucks store every time? Why?

**Factors Causing Expectation**

10. Can you remember the current Starbucks ad?
11. Can you give some examples of Starbucks statement or slogan?
12. What is the current promotion Starbucks launching?

**Experienced Quality**

13. Does Starbucks provide the high quality of coffee? Why?
14. Does Starbucks coffee match with your need? Why?

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\(^{10}\) 1 USD = 32.4 THB (June 13, 2010)
15. Does Starbucks staff provide the good service with a friendly way to you? Why?
16. When you need some suggestion from Starbucks staff, are they interested in answering your question?
17. Does Starbucks provide the good atmosphere inside its store? Why?
18. Does Starbucks provide enough seats inside its store? Why?
19. Do you satisfy when coming to Starbucks store? Why?

Technical Quality with Sensory System
20. What do you think about the Starbucks products’ packaging?
21. How about the taste of Starbucks’ coffee? Do you have any recommendations to improve it?
22. If we talk about the smell of Starbucks’ coffee, do you have any comments on this smell? How can it affect on your purchasing decision?

Functional Quality with Sensory System
23. What do you see from Starbucks’ atmosphere such as picture on the wall, light, or color using in the store? Why?
24. What do you see from Starbucks’ atmosphere when you meet Starbucks staff talking with consumers in a friendly way? Why?
25. What is your opinion about music opening inside Starbucks store?
26. What is your opinion when Starbucks has free sample for you before buying its product?
27. What is your opinion about Starbucks stores’ location?

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Thai version
สวัสดีค่ะ ดิฉันเป็นนักศึกษา ที่กำลังศึกษาปริญญาโท ณ มหาวิทยาลัยมาลาดาเลนประเทศสวีเดน วิชาเอกด้านการตลาดระหว่างประเทศ ตอนนี้ดิฉันกำลังเก็บข้อมูลการสอบถาม เพื่อเป็นประโยชน์ในการทำวิทยานิพนธ์ ซึ่งต้องการผู้เข้าร่วม จำนวน 60 คน จากการสัมภาษณ์ออนไลน์ ดิฉันได้เห็นถึงศักยภาพในตัวของท่าน
ว่าสามารถให้ข้อมูลที่เป็นประโยชน์ต่อวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ ติดลิ้นใครรู้ความรู้นา
d้วยความร่วมมือของท่านในการถามข้อมูลนั้นค่ะ

Part 1: Demographics

1. เพศ
2. อาชีพ
3. การศึกษา
4. รายได้ (บาท ต่อเดือน)
   1) 10,000 – 15,000  2) 15,001 – 20,000  3) มากกว่า 20,000

Part 2: Total Perceived Quality and Sensory System

Expected Quality

6. ก่อนที่ท่านจะมาที่ร้านเสดราบัค ท่านคาดหวังในด้าน  กาแฟ
   ของเสดราบัครอย่างไรบ้าง เพราะเหตุใด
7. ก่อนที่ท่านจะมาที่ร้านเสดราบัค ท่านคาดหวังใน การบริการ
   ของเสดราบัคอย่างไรบ้าง เพราะเหตุใด
8. ก่อนที่ท่านจะมาที่ร้านเสดราบัค ท่านคาดหวังใน บรรยากาศ
   ภายในร้านเสดราบัคอย่างไรบ้าง เพราะเหตุใด
9. ก่อนที่ท่านจะมาที่ร้านเสดราบัค ท่านคาดหวังให้ร้านเสดราบัคทำให้ อารมณ์
   ของท่านเป็นอย่างไร เช่น สนุกสนาน ผ่อนคลาย เพราะเหตุใด

Factors Causing Expectation

10. ท่านสามารถบอกว่าโฆษณาต่างๆ สำหรับเสดราบัค ได้หรือไม่
11. ท่านสามารถบอกว่าภาพคุณภาพหรือโลโก้ที่ทางเสดราบัคมีอยู่ ได้หรือไม่
12. อะไรคือกิจกรรมการส่งเสริมการขายที่เสดราบัคใช้อยู่ตอนนี้
Experienced Quality

13. กาแฟของสตาร์บัคร์มีคุณภาพสูง ใช่หรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด
14. กาแฟของทางสตาร์บัคร์ต้องกับความต้องการของท่าน ใช่หรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด
15. บริการของสตาร์บัคร์เป็นบริการที่ดี และเป็นมิตรต่อท่าน ใช่หรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด
16. เมื่อท่านต้องการคำแนะนำจากพนักงานของร้านสตาร์บัคร์ พวกเขาใส่ใจที่จะตอบคำถามของท่านใช่หรือไม่
17. บรรยากาศภายในร้านสตาร์บัคร์ เป็นบรรยากาศที่ดีหรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด
18. สตาร์บัคร์จัดหาที่นั่งไวเพียงพอใช่หรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด
19. ท่านมีความพึงพอใจ เมื่อได้มาที่ร้านสตาร์บัคร์ ใช่หรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด

Technical Quality with Sensory System

20. ท่านมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรบ้างต่อบรรจุภัณฑ์ของร้านสตาร์บัคร์
21. ท่านมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรบ้างต่อ รสชาติ ของกาแฟที่ร้านสตาร์บัคร์
22. ถ้าเราพูดถึง กลิ่น ของกาแฟที่ร้านสตาร์บัคร์ ท่านคิดว่ามันควรถูกปรับปรุงอย่างไร

Functional Quality with Sensory System

23. ท่านมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรบ้างต่อสภาพบรรยากาศภายในร้านสตาร์บัคร์ เพราะเหตุใด
24. เมื่อท่านเห็นพนักงานของร้านสตาร์บัคร์พูดคุยด้วยท่านเป็นมิตรกับลูกค้า ท่านคิดว่าสถานการณ์แบบนี้ทำให้บรรยากาศของร้านสตาร์บัคร์เป็นแบบไหน เพราะเหตุใด
25. ท่านมีความคิดเห็นอย่างไรบ้างต่อเสียงเพลงที่เปิดภายในร้านสตาร์บัคร์
26. ท่านมีความคิดเห็นต่อสถานที่ตั้งของร้านสตาร์บัคร์ เพราะเหตุใด
27. ท่านมีความคิดเห็นต่อสถานที่ตั้งของร้านสตาร์บัคร์ เพราะเหตุใด