

STARBUCKS

Development Based on Differentiation Strategy

Dummy Report for Strategic Management and Sustainability

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Main Products of Starbucks

Coffee: More than 30 blends and single-origin premium coffees.

Handcrafted Beverages: Fresh-brewed coffee, hot and iced espresso beverages, Frappuccino® coffee and non-coffee blended beverages, Starbucks Refreshers® beverages, smoothies and teas.

Merchandise: Coffee- and tea-brewing equipment, Verismo® System by Starbucks, mugs and accessories, packaged goods, books and gifts.

Fresh Food: Baked pastries, sandwiches, salads, salad and grain bowls, oatmeal, yogurt parfaits and fruit cups.

Consumer Products

Coffee and Tea: Whole bean and ground coffee (Starbucks and Seattle's Best Coffee brands), Starbucks VIA® Instant, Starbucks® Coffee K-Cup® pods, Starbucks® and Teavana® Verismo® pods, Tazo® tea filterbags, and Tazo® tea latte concentrates.

Ready-to-Drink (RTD): Starbucks® bottled Frappuccino® coffee drinks, Starbucks Discoveries® chilled cup coffees, Starbucks Discoveries Iced Café Favorites®, Starbucks Iced Coffee, Starbucks Doubleshot® espresso drinks, Starbucks Doubleshot® Energy Coffee drinks; Starbucks Refreshers® beverages, Evolution Fresh™ bottled juices, Tazo® bottled iced and juiced teas.

Source: Starbucks Coffee Company. (2017). Starbucks Company Profile. [online] Available at:

<https://www.starbucks.com/about-us/company-information/starbucks-company-profile> [Accessed 10 Nov. 2017].

Appendix 2

Examples of store design

University Village - Seattle, Washington



Shanghai World Exposition Site, Shanghai, China



2/3 Conduit St., London, United Kingdom



Source: Starbucks Coffee Company. (2017). Store Design. [online] Available at: <https://www.starbucks.com/coffeehouse/store-design> [Accessed 16 Nov. 2017].

Appendix 3

Question 1: Have you heard of Starbucks before?

Question 2: Have you ever been to Starbucks before?

The result of these two questions are underneath.

Table 1 Result of these two questions

	Have you ever been to Starbucks	Have you ever heard of Starbucks
YES	88 (44%)	180 (90%)
NO	112 (56%)	20 (10%)
Total	200	200

Source: Rizwan, M. (2008). Study of Brand Awareness and BrandImage of Starbucks.

Executive Summary

This report will:

- Introduce the background of Starbucks and synthesize theoretical concepts.**
- Identify the competitive strategy adopted by Starbucks.**
- Analyze the implementation of Starbucks' Differentiation Strategy.**
- Critically evaluate advantages and limitations of the strategy.**
- Draw conclusions and offer suggestions based on the analysis**

The information cited in the report was all from a variety of references, including journals, books, news and Starbucks official website.

Starbucks Corporation is a global coffee retail chain of specialty coffee. It can be found that Starbucks has utilized differentiation strategy of Porter's Generic Strategies in order to develop its current competitive position.

Starbucks has implemented the following actions to accomplish this strategy:

- Providing differentiated products**
- Guaranteeing service of high quality**
- Word of Mouth Marketing**
- Undertaking corporate social responsibility**
- Investing in technology and development**

On one hand, there are several strengths of Starbucks' differentiation strategy which have shown during the process of Starbucks' strategy implementation, they are:

-**Non-Price Competition:** by offering differentiated products and a highly developed corporation image, Starbucks does not need to compete on price.

-**Brand Loyalty:** a successful differentiation strategy creates brand loyalty among customers, which can greatly help stabilize the company's revenue and mitigate the impact of market's unpredictable recession.

-**Few Perceived Substitute:** a differentiation strategy that focuses on the quality and design of products may create the perception that there are few substitutes available on the competitive market.

On the other hand, there are also some limitations of Starbucks' differentiation strategy, such as:

-**Keeping a Balance:** due to constant market competition and changeable market, it is difficult to maintain a differentiation strategy in the long run.

-**High costs:** differentiation strategies cost relatively more than low-cost suppliers, as it will cost more to provide better products or services.

My recommendations for the improvement of Starbucks' strategy implementation are:

- To set different levels of prices according to development levels**
- To promote online shopping**
- To expand marketing channels**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Objectives

This report will introduce the background of Starbucks and synthesize theoretical concepts. After identifying the competitive strategy adopted by Starbucks, the implementation of Starbucks' differentiation strategy need to be analyzed. Under the analysis, this report will critically evaluate advantages and limitations of the strategy in the current environment. Finally, this report will draw conclusions and offer suggestions based on the analysis

1.2 Background of Starbucks

Starbucks Corporation is a global coffee retail chain of specialty coffee and other related beverages, with more than 10,500 retail locations in North America, Latin America, the Pacific Rim, Europe, and the Middle East (Marketline, 2017).

The company's stores are designed to be cozy and intimate with a combination of armchairs, sofas, bars and stools, coffee tables and chairs, and meeting room tables (Marketline, 2017).

In 1971, Starbucks opened first store in Seattle's Pike Place Market.

In 1984, Howard Schultz (Starbucks chairman) convinced the founders of Starbucks to test the coffeehouse concept in downtown Seattle, bringing the Italian coffeehouse tradition back to the United States (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2017).

In 1987, Starbucks transformed into a beverage provider, referring to Italian coffee houses.

For Starbucks, the successful listing on the NASDAQ in New York in 1992 led the company into fast growth. With a solid financial foundation, Starbucks entered rapid expansion, not only in the United States, but also overseas (Seaford, 2012).

1.3 Business Level Strategy

Johnson and Scholes (Johnson, 2008, pp. 3) define strategy as follows:

"Strategy is the direction and scope of an organisation over the long-term, which achieves advantage for the organisation through its configuration of resources within a challenging environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfil stakeholder expectations".

Strategies exist at several levels in any organisation - ranging from the overall business (or group of businesses) through to individuals working in it.

There are three main levels of strategy:

- Corporate Strategy

- Business Level Strategy

-Operational Strategy.

According to Johnson (Johnson, 2008, pp, 7), “*business -level strategy is about how to compete successfully in particular markets*”.

Business-level strategy puts the consumer first and makes shoppers the centerpiece of all corporate endeavors. This is done so as to enhance client relationships and entice consumers to maintain long-term associations with specific businesses.

1.4 Competitive Advantage

A competitive advantage is what makes you better than the competitors in your customers' minds. The term was first applied to businesses, but it works for anyone, from employees to countries.

Michael Porter defined the two ways in which an organization can achieve competitive advantage over its rivals: cost advantage and differentiation advantage. Cost advantage is when a business provides the same products and services as its competitors, albeit at a lesser cost. Differentiation advantage is when a business provides better products and services as its competitors. In Porter's view, strategic management should be concerned with building and sustaining competitive advantage (Porter, 1985) .

1.5 Porter’s Generic Strategies

Porter (1980, 1985) developed the concept of generic competitive strategies – overall cost-leadership, differentiation, and focus – to represent different strategic orientations a firm should pursue in order to realize its goals. Porter claimed that firms that pursue any of these strategic orientations would acquire a competitive advantage that would enable them to outperform competitors in their industry.

Porter’s Generic strategies include:

- Cost Leadership Strategy
- Differentiation Strategy
- Cost Focus Strategy
- Differentiation Focus Strategy.

The generic strategies are shown in Figure1 (Studylecturenotes.com, 2017).

Target/Market Scope	Advantage	
	Low Cost	Product/Service Uniqueness
Broad (Industry Wide)	Cost Leadership Strategy	Differentiation Strategy
Narrow (Market Segment)	Focus Strategy (low cost)	Focus Strategy (differentiation)

Figure1: Porter’s Generic Strategies

2.0 Main findings

2.1 Definition of Differentiation Strategy

A firm that pursues a differentiation strategy seeks to create a perception in the minds of customers that their products or services possess superior characteristics that are unique from those of its competitors in terms of image and reputation, reliability, design features and quality (Dean and Evans, 1994).

Relevant points of differentiation vary between markets. Within each market too, businesses may differentiate along different dimensions.

The strategy of differentiation requires that a firm either create a product or provide a service that is recognized as being unique, thus permitting the firm to command higher-than-average prices. Because of the loyalty then created for the brand, demand will be price-inelastic, leading to higher profit margins for the manufacturer (Acquaah & Yasai-Ardekani, 2008).

2.2 Implementation of Starbucks' Differentiation Strategy

Differentiation is a marketing strategy that involves making distinct changes in goods or services to make them stand out from others in the market (Collett, 2013).

According to the definition of Porter's generic strategies (Porter, 1980) and the analysis of Starbucks' development (Schultz, 1997), Starbucks' key strategy is differentiation strategy. Its implementation will be analyzed in different cases as below: differentiated products with high quality, superb service, brand reputation and a high level of corporate social responsibility.

2.2.1 Differentiated Products

The key product strategy taken by Starbucks is a differentiation strategy to attract customers to increase customer loyalty by delivering differentiated products.

2.2.1.1 Product Categories

Starbucks's main product has three series: classic coffee, Frappuccino and tea drinks. The first category of classic coffee is mainly Latte, Vanilla Latte, Cappuccino, Mocha, Caramel Macchiato, Espresso (concentrated) and so on. The second category of Frappuccino mainly includes caramel or (concentrated) coffee, mocha, vanilla, and chocolate tastes. The third category of tea drinks are mainly oolong tea, white tea, chai tea, green tea and English breakfast tea (Marketline, 2017). Appendix 1 provides a list of Starbucks product offerings.

In addition to the above three types of beverages, Its retail products include over 30 premium coffee beans, handmade espresso coffee, a selection of hot and cold drinks such as coffee and tea, fresh and delicious pastries, snacks and a rich variety of coffee or

company-related derivatives(Starbucks Coffee Company, 2017)

2.2.1.2 Pursuit of High Quality and Standards

Quality is a relatively enduring affective orientation for a product, store or process (Dadfar et al., 2013) and may be perceived as a method to obtain differentiation depending on the service (Martensen and Gronholdt, 2010).

To ensure the quality of Starbucks coffee, Starbucks has a dedicated purchasing system. In order to buy the best coffee beans in the world, they often exchange and communicate with local coffee growers and exporters in Indonesia, East Africa and Latin America.

Starbucks adheres to the highest standards of working process in the industry and insists on the best freshness of coffee beans. If the coffee does not meet the standards, it will be scrapped to ensure the color and aroma of every cup of coffee. As a result, there is an increasing interest in this specialty coffee for its rich flavor which enhances customer awareness and demand for high-quality coffee.

2.2.1.3 Seasonal Menu

Starbucks keep their seasonal beverage range secret until the run up to their launch. Starbucks launches iced coffee, frappuccino in summer and hot drinks in winter. There are three types of coffee in ice coffee, milk, tea and other products. Frappuccino species are also increasing, from the mango to the present passion flower, black mold and so on. There is also a special offer of brewed coffee during the holidays(Countdown To Red Cups, 2017).

2.2.2 Service Quality

As Starbucks continues to expand, it will meet with many new markets and cultures, each requiring a unique and compelling product. Starbucks continually strives to provide its clients with a high level of value and satisfaction, not only in the scope of their products, but also in the services they provide (Talpa & Boscor, 2011).

2.2.2.1 Customer First

The main goal of Starbucks is to serve people, not coffee. This means that they put their customers at the first of their activities, so all their decisions and actions take the needs of their customers into account (Serwer, 2004).

Customer First is the highest service guidelines of Starbucks. Through a series of service skills training, including basic etiquette, sales skills, coffee knowledge, etc., service skills will not only be standardized, but also be humanized. Employees need to show professional knowledge, and natural kindness and enthusiasm.

Starbucks attach great emphasis on customer experience in the coffee shop.

Customers get more than just a cup of coffee, as well as comfortable space. There are magazines latest newspapers on the shelves for reading. In addition, waiters

occasionally serve "try drink cup", allowing customers to try new tastes and a small surprise. Many branches have set up "coffee classroom", and regularly invite coffee fans to attend.

2.2.2.2 Excellent store design

At Starbucks headquarters in the United States, there is a dedicated design studio with a team of professional designers and artists who specialize in designing Starbucks outlets around the world. When they design each store, they all base on the characteristics of the local environment. As a result, Starbucks stores look similar, but each has its own unique characteristics. Some examples of store design are listed in appendix 2.

2.2.3 Word of mouth marketing

Word of mouth communication is relevant to the organization's services, products, methods of operation, trustworthiness, and creditworthiness. It enables this information to be disseminated among different customer groups. This is not a single service or product can be formed, it is generated through long-term business (MacLeod, 2009). The quality of word of mouth is the key point for enterprises to obtain customers' trust.

2.2.3.1 Employee

Starbucks views employees as valuable assets, as promoters of the company's brand image. During service, employees can provide customers with related product services and detailed elaboration of value concepts, to enhance their customers' recognition of Starbucks, which can effectively promote word-of-mouth effects.

2.2.3.2 Customer

Starbucks provides consumers with a quality consumer experience, which will guide consumers to share this premium consumer experience with their friends. This is essentially an efficient, low-cost free advertisement. Compared with traditional commercial advertisement, this mode's main purpose of is not payoff. Due to the excessive amount of traditional advertisements, the information density of advertisements has already exceeded the acceptance of consumers, making consumers feel disgusted with the advertisements (Tian, 2008). However, word of mouth communication is an effective communication method of sharing people's consumption experience. It helps to guide consumers to consume (Zhang, Jansen, 2011).

Based on the investigation to what extent the young Swedes know about the brand of Starbucks, the result is in appendix 3, which has shown the impact of word of mouth marketing (Rizwan, 2008).

2.2.3.3 Advantage

Over the past two decades, Starbucks has spent approximately \$ 20 million on advertising, which means \$ 1 million a year in average (Tian, 2008). Word of mouth

marketing not only saves Starbucks huge advertising and promotion budgets, but also made employees more loyal by spending what they should have spent on employee benefits and training.

Starbucks has become the 131st famous global brand in Fortune 500 over the world (Fortune, 2017) without major advertising costs. The reputation of customers is the most powerful promotion way for Starbucks.

2.2.4 Corporate social responsibility

According to Philip Kotler And Nancy Lee. (2005, pp, 3), the definition of corporate social responsibility is

“a commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources”.

Starbucks constantly contributes to the community through a variety of activities that reflect corporate social responsibility, such as improving the environment, rewarding partners and farmers in coffee-producing areas.

The farming charity Send a Cow has teamed up with Starbucks in a project to help farming communities in East Africa. Starbucks are donating £250,000 to launch the Coffee + Cows project with the charity in Rwanda. The three year project will directly benefit over 3,000 people by providing them with training in sustainable farming techniques and social development, livestock and ongoing support ('Undefined Headline', 2017).

The core of Starbucks mission is “To inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time (Starbucks)”. Starbucks Corporation is dedicated to engaging in community activities and reaching out to customers. These programs include hiring 10,000 US military and military spouses, preparing 50,000 hours for local community careers and services, and "becoming a partner sport" on Twitter (Milestones, 2017).

In view of Starbucks unique corporation culture, the company has been listed in “Most Admired Companies in America” by Fortune from 2003-2015 (Starbucks Coffee Company, 2017)

2.2.5 Technology and Development

2.2.5.1 Technology

To ensure product quality, Starbucks cannot do without the unique technology. Starbucks owns patented technology for coffee roasting, mixing, extraction, cooling and vacuum packaging (Anon, 2007).

The first is the baking process of coffee. Coffee baking is divided into weak, medium and strong baking three stages. Their different roles will be different coffee flavor to play most vividly.

The second is coffee blending process. A coffee made of a combination of individuality and specific coffee beans. Blend that people often see is the coffee that has been combined. The mix of coffee makes a different taste by changing the amount of mixing

and the degree of grinding of the coffee beans and therefore requires very specialized and scientific grinding and mixing processes.

The third technique is promoting freshness with Flavorlock bag technology. The Flavorlock bag utilizes a special one-way valve that allows the carbon dioxide that is released by freshly roasted coffee beans to escape a sealed coffee bag without allowing 'flavor-robbing' oxygen to get in (Anon, 2007).

2.2.5.2 Development

As a leader in the industry, Starbucks has a very fast pace of product innovation. In order to cater to the tastes of more customers, Starbucks also introduces personal service, which means it can make personal coffee drink according to the individual needs of individual customers.

Starbucks has entered new campuses and expanded coverage of its existing campus, including opening the largest Starbucks coffee shop at Carleton University in Canada for up to 100 customers.

Mobile payment system is an important part of marketing model. Starbucks, through its partnership with Square, is able to transfer the form of debit and credit card pay. From all Starbucks coffee shops in the United States, Pay with Square is another payment method for Starbucks consumers (Anon 2014).

2.2.6 Strengths of Starbucks' Differentiation Strategy

2.2.6.1 Non-Price Competition

A positive aspect of a successful differentiation strategy is that companies may charge a premium for their products or services. Differentiation strategy also allows businesses to compete in areas other than price (Porter, 1985). Differing in the quality of goods, customers will have a preferred brand regardless of the price.

Compared with other coffee brands, Starbucks consumption level is relatively high, which means it does not have an edge over its competitors in terms of prices. However, Starbucks is confident because of its highly developed and strong corporate image. Due to the lack of alternatives on the market, companies are able to pass on higher supplier costs to their customers at any time.

2.2.6.2 Brand Loyalty

A successful differentiation strategy creates brand loyalty among customers. Having a group of loyal customers can greatly help the company stabilize its revenue and mitigate the impact of the market's unpredictable recession.

Starbucks has taken differentiation strategy to build customer trust in its brand. This has made it difficult for other competitors to catch up, as brand trust is accumulated in the long term. Consumers form the trust of the brand, thus they are more willing to purchase the products. It means that Starbucks will be more profitable.

2.2.6.3 Few Perceived Substitutes

A differentiation strategy that focuses on the quality and design of the product may create the perception that there are few substitutes available on the market.

Starbucks has an increasing number of competitors and they may have similar products. The differentiation strategy, focusing on the quality or design differences that other products don't have, makes Starbucks gain an advantage on the market.

2.2.7 Limitations of Starbucks' Differentiation Strategy

2.2.7.1 Keeping a Balance

Differentiation strategy may not be entirely ideal for each company. Due to constant market competition and changeable market, it is difficult to maintain a differentiation strategy in the long run.

Starbucks needs to keep the balance by competing on such things as price setting, service and quality, or on any other combinations of attributes which are crucial to gaining competitive advantages, especially competing with so many competitors.

2.2.7.2 High costs

Differentiation strategies cost relatively more than low-cost suppliers, as it will cost more to provide better products or services.

Customer needs change over time, and businesses can only ignore this at their own risk. Starbucks that continually revamps products does attract loyal customers, but product differentiation requires extensive resources for market research to understand customer needs, product development, launch, advertising, and monitoring. Customers ultimately bear the burden of these costs by buying these goods at a higher cost.

3.0 Conclusions

Starbucks has utilized differentiation strategy of Porter's Generic Strategies in order to develop its current competitive position.

The implementation of Starbucks' differentiation strategy includes providing differentiated products to attract customers and improving service quality to reach customer satisfaction. Furthermore, Starbucks choose to promote brand image and advertise through word of mouth marketing. The corporation also focuses on combining corporate social responsibility with Starbucks' corporation culture and brand value, and constantly invest in technology and development to assure standards of products.

4.0 Recommendations

To set different levels of prices according to development levels in different places so that Starbucks can attract more customers in different classes.

To promote online shopping-a prevalent shopping method in contemporary society.

To expand marketing channels such as let some large shopping malls sell coffee products on behalf of Starbucks.

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