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Introduction

Starbucks is a leading global coffeehouse brand, and its recent financial growth reveals a strong international presence and the ability to adapt its marketing strategies across diverse markets. This report examines how Starbucks operates in two key countries: the USA and the UK, highlighting how the company balances global brand consistency with local market needs. The discussion covers socio-cultural differences, STP strategies, marketing mix elements, ethical considerations, and performance evaluation across both markets. The reported literature shows major contrasts in lifestyle and work patterns that shape coffee consumption in each country. The USA offers time-starved and personalised drinks supporting an on-the-go culture (Lim et al., 2025). In contrast, UK consumers use cafés as social spaces, valuing ambience, slower visits, and healthier, plant-based options (de Castro Carvalho et al., 2025). These trends explain why Starbucks emphasises convenience and digital speed in the USA, while focusing on ethical, wellness-oriented and experience-driven services in the UK. *[refer to Appendix 1]*.

Brand overview

Starbucks is based in Seattle and was established in 1971 with the purpose of becoming the best seller of the best coffee in the world, “inspiring and nurturing the human spirit one person, one cup and one neighbourhood at a time” (starbucks, 2024a). Nowadays, Starbucks has thousands of shops worldwide and combines strong digital- and sustainability-oriented projects to support the brand image of a premium lifestyle. Starbucks operates in over 80 countries, with a company that has established a robust international presence due to a uniform premium coffee experience and a fully functioning digital ecosystem. The mobile ordering, loyalty rewards and personalised service are things that help the brand in enhancing customer engagement. Moreover, its focus on ethical sourcing and sustainability campaigns makes it have a good reputation, which contributes to the success of Starbucks in all parts of the world as quality-conscious people and socially conscious individuals are attracted to its offerings*[refer to appendix 2]*.

Comparison of the socio-cultural context of USA and UK

In the USA, almost three-quarters of adults drink coffee daily and 50 % of the population purchase coffee in a coffee shop at least once a week. In the UK, 16% of the population drinks coffee in a store at least once a week, with 80% every day

(driverresearch, 2024). The focus on ethical sourcing and sustainability also can be observed among British consumers, which affects their preference towards cafes (Brown, 2021). Indicatively, the UK coffee shops are increasingly becoming community centres that deal with value and high-end experiences. These socio-cultural differences suggest that in the USA Starbucks focuses more on speed and digital convenience, and customisation, whereas in the UK it focuses more on the store environment, ethical values, and local menu distinction to attract a conscientious consumer in the UK, as required by the PESTLE framework on cultural analysis. This section compares consumer behaviour in the USA and UK, and relates ethical demands and lifestyle choice to the product and service offering at Starbucks, service experience and communication approach, which underpins the general discussion of international marketing adaptation. The reported literature is also highly dissimilar in the way of life and work ethics, which define coffee consumption in both nations. The USA offers time-starved and personalised drinks, which support the existing on-the-go culture that is dominant in this country (Lim et al, 2025). On the contrary, UK consumers are visiting cafes more often as social and leisure venues, where they place more importance on ambience and more slow, experience-oriented visits. In the UK, health-conscious behaviour is also more noticeable because the demand for less sugar drinks and plant-based equivalents has increased (de Castro Carvalho et al., 2025). These socio-cultural patterns directly shape the Social factor of the PESTLE analysis. In the USA, high coffee consumption and fast lifestyles push Starbucks to optimise convenience, personalisation and mobile ordering. In the UK, strong social café culture and ethical expectations require Starbucks to deliver community-based store environments, sustainability communication and healthier menu choices. These social differences influence all other marketing decisions. Those trends demonstrate why Starbucks focuses on convenience and online speed in the USA and on ethical, wellness-conscious and ambience-oriented services in the UK.

PESTLE Analysis

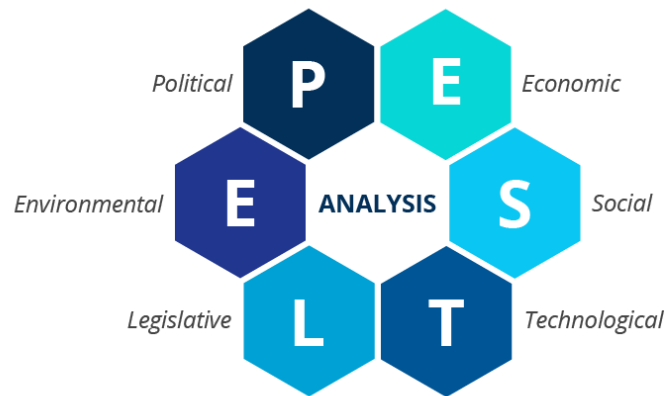


Figure: Pestle Framework

(Source: Ćosić and Hibler, 2021)

Country A — USA (Starbucks Market)

The Pestle framework allows studying the external environment that affects the activities of Starbucks in the United States by focusing on the political, economic, sociocultural, technological, legal, and environmental contexts. These aspects are summarized in the table and their impact on the strategic choice of Starbucks is identified, including pricing, store designs, digital investment, and sustainability efforts (Ćosić and Hibler, 2021). The presence of these factors in the organized form of the table allows seeing the opportunities and risks in the U.S. market easier. The current analysis can also be used to compare the USA to the UK to determine the impact of the external environments on the international marketing strategy of Starbucks.

Country B: UK — PESTLE

The UK PESTLE table describes the major macro environmental forces that influence the operations of Starbucks in this market. It emphasizes the role of political shifts like the Brexit, economic stresses including inflation, and excellent socio-cultural attitudes towards ethical purchase in Starbucks decision-making on pricing, sourcing and the store experience (George, 2021). The use of technology, legal requirements and environmental standards also dictate the way in which the company designs its online strategy, labour policies and green projects. These factors are organized in the table and presented in a systematic manner, contributing to complexity of understanding the risks and opportunities of Starbucks in the UK, as well as facilitating further comparison of the markets of the U.S. and the UK.

PESTLE Factor

Political

USA

Favourable

Stable political system with strong support for business growth; U.S. food & beverage industry is influenced by trade policies and labour regulations. Minimum wage reforms in many states impact operating costs for cafés like Starbucks (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, 2021). When political environment is stable, the business has certain predictable rules to operate and therefore Starbucks may easily invest, open new store and even plan long-term operations. Market expansion and innovation is also promoted by the government assistance in business development.

Unfavourable

Higher labour costs increase operating expenses and encourage Starbucks to expand drive-thru and mobile-only formats to reduce staffing pressure. An increase in wages is a direct increase in the operating costs of Starbucks and as such, decreases the profit margins. This compels the company to rethink the stores formats and rely more on automation or low staffing that may constrain store experience and raise investment requirements.

UK

Favourable

UK is politically stable and regulates business in an open manner which favours the international brands like Starbucks. Nevertheless, the post-Brexit trade policy and immigration regulations have affected the supply of labour in the hospitality sector and augmented the expenses of importing coffee beans and dairy supplies (Carter, Warren and Steinhoff, 2022). The food and beverage regulations are also influenced by the government emphasis on the public health. The existence of a consistent and transparent political environment facilitates easy operations by Starbucks, facilitating investment and growth of the company in the UK cities. International brands can be able to plan long term with the help of clear regulatory systems that are less likely to create uncertainty.

Unfavourable

Starbucks faces higher supply chain costs, pushing the brand to increase sourcing efficiency and rely more on local suppliers where possible. The challenges associated with imports after Brexit and the increase in the cost of logistics decrease the profit margins of Starbucks and complicate the management of the supply chain.

The company has to incur additional costs on sourcing changes, and this leads to heightened operational pressure.

Economic

USA

Favourable

U.S. coffee market valued at USD \$67.65 billion in 2024, projected 5.2% CAGR through 2030, reflecting strong demand for premium coffee and specialty beverages (grandviewresearch, 2025). The high presence and growth of large market will provide Starbucks with greater revenue avenues and premium product pricing. High demand implies that customers will be ready to pay on personalised high-quality beverages to make profit grow.

Unfavourable

Strong demand supports premium pricing, but inflation pushes Starbucks to rely more on loyalty discounts and app-based promotions. When inflation is high, the consumers do not have much disposable income and this increases the operating costs of Starbucks. This compels Starbucks to resort to discounts and promotions which reduces profit margins even when there is a high demand in the market.

UK

Favourable

UK coffee market is also growing amidst inflation and pressure of cost of living. The premium coffee business is also strong, and it is estimated that the market value will increase by approximately 1.79% (CAGR 2025-2030) (Statista, 2024). Increasing cost of operations such as energy and labour influence the pricing strategies of cafes to such an extent that the brands have to balance cost and premium product positioning. Expansion on the upscale coffee segment provides Starbucks with a fixed pool of customers who are ready to pay on quality. With high demand, Starbucks is able to survive and keep brand value in the challenging economic conditions.

Unfavourable

Starbucks must balance premium pricing with value offerings, using promotions and loyalty rewards to retain price-sensitive customers. Many consumers in the UK are increasingly becoming cost-conscious due to the cost-of-living pressures. To stay affordable, Starbucks will have to provide additional deals, which decreases the amount of revenue per customer and makes it even more price-sensitive.

Socio-Cultural

USA

Social

U.S. consumers prioritise convenience, personalised beverages, and loyalty rewards. 75% of Americans drink coffee daily; 50% purchase from cafés weekly, showing strong “on-the-go” culture. Such behaviour corresponds to the ideas of customisation, mobile ordering, and quick service that Starbucks has strengths in. The high daily consumption is an indication of high frequency which enhances the revenue of Starbucks and helps in its product innovation.

Unfavourable

Starbucks benefits from high beverage customisation, but must continue investing in speed, drive-thru formats, and personalised digital experiences. To ensure a high service speed, it is necessary to continuously invest in technology, the redesign of the staffing and the store. These are increasing operation costs that minimise profit margins and they put the strain of trying to match their competitors who are selling the same convenience.

Cultural

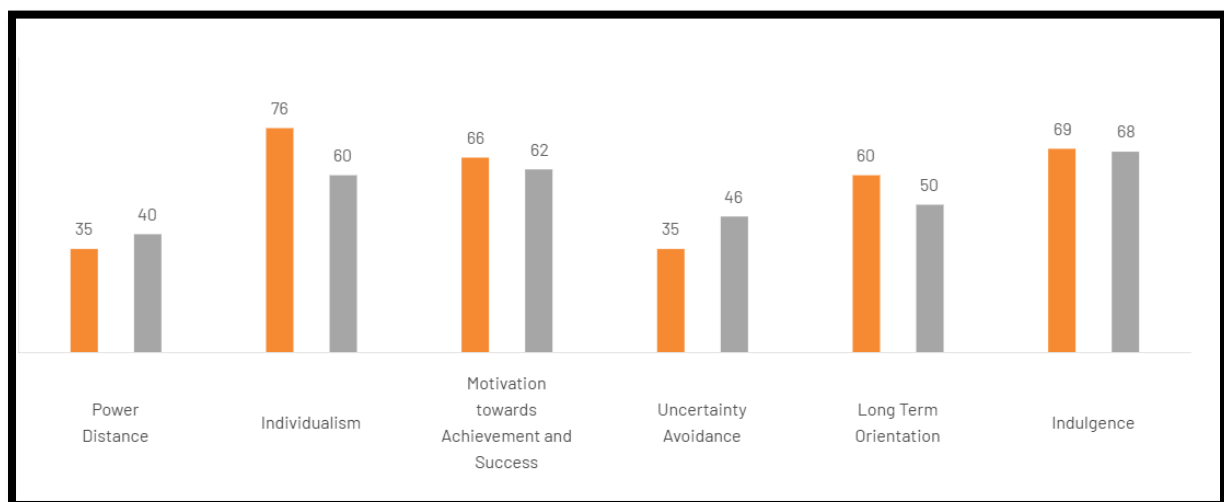


Figure 1: UK vs USA Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Comparison

(Source: Self-Created)

Favourable

The culture of the U.S. fosters equality, autonomy and initiative since PDI is 40 and the IDV 60 is high. The achievement and the consumer spending and innovation are promoted by High MAS 62 and IND 68. Moderate UAI 46 facilitates the openness to new ideas to help it quickly implement digital and experience marketing. These

cultural characteristics help Starbucks in its personalised, innovative and digital-first model. New technologies, seasonal beverages and customisation are readily accepted by the consumers, which means that Starbucks can easily introduce new products and encourage customers to increase their expenditures.

Unfavourable

High IDV 60 diminishes group cohesion, and MAS 62 enhances competition and stress. IND 68 feeds immediate gratification and impulsiveness. A moderate UAI 46 leads to inconsistent risk management and LTO 50 leads to a short term orientation of business which restricts its sustainability and long term strategic planning. Such cultural trends complicate the process of preaching long-term sustainability values to Starbucks or create a sense of loyalty to the community. Short term thinking tends to diminish customer interest in long-term projects that are ethical and maximizes the demand of new promotions and expedited services.

UK

Social

Favourable

The culture of coffee in the UK focuses on the ambiance of the cafes, quality experience and ethical consumption. Approximately 80 percent of consumers in the UK go to coffee shops weekly, and they show enthusiasm toward sustainable sourcing, plant-based options, and community-like cafes. The consumer behaviours of people in the UK are more value-driven and socially conscious than that of U.S. audiences do (MacDonnell, 2022). These inclinations are quite compatible with the Starbucks ethical sourcing programmes and high-end cafe setting. The sustainability and plant-based decisions make Starbucks have good chances to sell responsibly and distinguish among fast-service competitors.

Unfavourable

Starbucks must highlight ethical sourcing, vegan options, and community-based store design to align with UK values. To fulfill these expectations, there is a need to invest more in ethical supply chain, plant-based menu innovation and redesign of stores. These are some of the extra expenses that result in a higher cost of operation compared to the markets where convenience is the focal point.

Cultural

Favourable

The low PDI 35 and UAI 35 in the UK promote equality, flexibility and problem solving in an adaptive manner. High IDV 76 is used to enhance independence, and MAS 66 is used to enhance ambition. LTO 60 and IND 69 foster pragmatism, innovativeness and high consumer responsiveness on innovative, ethical and lifestyle-oriented products. These cultural characteristics favor the premium and ethical and experience based positioning of Starbucks. Consumers in the UK are ready to use sustainable-based products, new flavours and plant-based alternatives, which increases the importance of Starbucks making innovations and communicating responsible sourcing.

Unfavourable

The low score of UAI 35 may result in unclear planning, whereas the high score of IDV 76 undermines collectivism. MAS 66 builds secretive competitiveness behind the humble communication. High IND 69 stimulates impulsive consumption, and PDI 35 is incompatible with long-term inequalities between classes, which makes the ideas of equity in marketing and organisational set-ups complicated. These are reasons why it becomes more difficult to establish a long-term regular community engagement with Starbucks. Impulse buying requires new offers continuously, and inequality issues are likely to pressurize Starbucks more to portray fairness, transparency, and ethical accountability.

Technological

USA

Favourable

High digital adoption: Starbucks has over 34 million U.S. rewards members in 2023, leading global loyalty app usage; mobile ordering & store pickup highly integrated (Arunachalam, 2025). High rate of digital usage enables Starbucks to attract more sales via personalisation, convenience and mobile promotions. This makes the frequency of orders high and enhances customer loyalty that has been achieved by smooth digital experiences.

Unfavourable

Creates competitive advantage through digital convenience but increases dependence on data management and tech infrastructure. Starbucks is susceptible to failure of technology, high maintenance rates and cost, and cybersecurity threats.

There is a need to make continuous investment to ensure that digital platforms remain viable, safe and competitive.

UK

Favourable

The UK has rapidly adopted digital platforms for ordering, payments, and loyalty rewards following COVID-19. Starbucks leverages mobile ordering, digital kiosks, and the Starbucks Rewards programme, though digital adoption in cafés remains slightly behind the U.S. market (Smith, 2024). Increasing digital adoption is also favoring the development of mobile capabilities by Starbucks, as well as enhancing order efficiency and appealing to tech-sensitive customers. It also empowers Starbucks to collect customer information to enhance the quality of service and specific offers.

Unfavourable

Starbucks needs to encourage digital adoption through rewards incentives while maintaining strong in-store experience for sit-in consumers. There is a trade between digital convenience and the strong cafe culture in the UK, which complicates operations. Starbucks has to make digital investments and upgrade the in-store service to provide high quality which increases costs and resource demands.

Legal

Favourable

U.S. food & beverage operators must comply with labour, safety, and consumer protection laws; wage increases and scheduling compliance remain key issues for Starbucks (Starbucks Workers United, 2024). Well defined federal and state legal systems offer law and order in the operations of Starbucks. Stable policies enable Starbucks to standardise operations in each of the stores and have a stable service model.

Unfavourable

Legal risks rising, requiring improved labour policies, training, and compliance frameworks across U.S. stores. Starbucks is more susceptible to litigations and regulatory fines due to the rise in union activities and labour conflicts. This compels the company to spend more on legal compliance, human resource reforms and employee protection which increases the total costs.

UK

Favourable

Strict UK labour laws demand compliance with fair wages, predictable scheduling, and employee welfare standards. The National Living Wage increases influence hiring costs for hospitality firms (Mills et al., 2023). There are also stringent food labelling and advertising standards that Starbucks must adhere to. Good labour and consumer laws boost brand loyalty and minimise the possibility of unscrupulous behaviour. This regulatory environment can help Starbucks build a strong image as a responsible employer and an open food-service distributor.

Unfavourable

Compliance increases operational costs, requiring Starbucks to strengthen HR practices and transparency in product information. Strict legal requirements require additional administrative work, training and monitoring. These added expenses lower the profit margins and also add pressure on Starbucks to keep changing its ways.

Environmental

USA

Favourable

Rising consumer & regulatory pressure for sustainability; Starbucks invests in reusable programs, ethical sourcing (C.A.F.E. practices), and carbon-neutral initiatives (Starbucks, 2024). The increase in environmental consciousness in the USA helps Starbucks to sustain its sustainability positioning and customer satisfaction with ethical behavior is enhanced. These programs assist the organization to be competitive and build the brand loyalty over the long term.

Unfavourable

Starbucks must invest in reusable cup programs, waste reduction, and sustainable sourcing, increasing operational costs but enhancing brand value. The process of sustainability demands enormous financial resource in the new systems, training and material. These expenses decrease the profitability in the short run, and put Starbucks under stress to constantly advance environmental performance.

UK

Favourable

The UK has one of Europe's strongest sustainability agendas, including waste-reduction laws, recycling targets, and plastic usage regulations. Starbucks aligns with these expectations through recyclable cups, reusable incentives, and ethically sourced coffee commitments (Zandieh et al, 2024). Tough environmental practices also allow Starbucks to gain confidence of environmentally conscious consumers in

the UK. The adherence to these rules helps to increase the responsible image of the brand and aids in customer loyalty in the long-term.

Unfavourable

Starbucks must invest more in reusable cup programmes, waste reduction and net-zero initiatives, which raise costs but improve brand trust. To comply with the UK environmental standards, it involves constant investment in more environment-friendly materials, upgrades and sustainability projects of stores. This raises the costs of operation and requires a continuous investment of funds.

The advantages and disadvantages should be based on the overall model

Advantages

PESTLE model would enable Starbucks to get a clear picture of the external environment that influences its operations in both the USA and the UK. It emphasizes the opportunities of expansion and strategic adjustment through political stability, robust expansion of the coffee market, digital integration, and the sustainability patterns. The model is also applicable in long term planning since it demonstrates the impact of cultural requirement, advancement in technologies and laws on consumer behaviour. These lessons enable Starbucks to productize, price, store format and communication strategies more effectively to suit local market requirements.

Disadvantages

Although it is useful, the PESTLE model has disadvantages in that it gives a wide and dynamic picture and it might be insufficient when it comes to capturing the fast changes that are taking place in the market and how this impacts on Starbucks. It is simplistic in complex variables that change consumer values, changing labour laws and unexpected economic shocks. It is also not reflected in the model because of interaction between factors, such as economic inflation and legal wage rules coming together to raise costs. Moreover, PESTLE does not relate to the capabilities of a company, so Starbucks will have to use alternative frameworks to have a full picture of the strategy.

Similarities

The USA and the UK offer politically stable business environments, high demand of high quality coffee, and increasing digital usage that facilitates mobile order placing and loyalty schemes. The demand on sustainability in the two markets is increasing, driving Starbucks to create ethical sourcing and waste disposal. Inflationary

pressures also affect each country, raising the costs of operation and forming the pricing tactics.

Differences

The USA focuses on speed, convenience, customization, and massive dependence on digital solutions whereas the UK lays stress on ambience, responsible consumption, and community-based coffee shop culture. U.S. rules are about labour compliance, whereas, the UK has more stringent rules regarding wages, labeling and sustainability of its products. American consumers are more mobile whereas the UK consumers appreciate the sit-in experiences and plant-based foods.

Comparison of Brand's STP strategies in USA and UK

The USA divisions of Starbucks are broader, consisting of urban professionals, digitally-sensitive millennials and elite seekers, and then users of its mobile application and rewards programme, and packaging it as a luxury, convenient between-home and workplace third-place (Team, 2025). The UK segmentation of Starbucks is shifting to younger, socially minded and value-sensitive high-end drinkers; the positioning and targeting is aimed at a high-end (high quality) but socially responsible brand (ethical sourcing and community experience). The identical quality brand name is used in both markets with the difference in their orientation: the USA orientation is more convenience and technology-oriented and the UK orientation rather more on ethical accolades and social space.

STP Strategy

Segmentation

USA

Starbucks segments the U.S. market primarily by demographics (millennials, Gen-Z, working professionals, students) and psychographics (convenience-driven, tech-savvy, premium lifestyle consumers). Behavioural segmentation is significant, focusing on frequent buyers, mobile-order users and loyal program members (Starbucks, 2024b). The U.S. customer profile shows strong emphasis on customisation and digital convenience, aligning with a fast-paced consumption culture.

UK

Starbucks divides the UK market based on demographics (young adults, urban professionals, students), psychographics (ethically conscious, like the experience in

a cafe) and behaviour (frequent cafe buyers, like the sit-in experience, likes sustainability and plant-based products) (Zhang and He, 2024). An increasing number of consumers are interested in premium consumption that is socially responsible and focuses more on ethical sourcing and community experiences.

Targeting

USA

Starbucks targets digitally engaged, convenience-focused consumers. Mobile orders reached 31% of U.S. transactions (Q4 FY2023); U.S. Rewards active members were 33.8 million (Q3 FY2024); Rewards members drove 57% of U.S. company-operated revenue in Q2–Q3 FY2023; and 70% of U.S. company-operated stores have drive-thru all underpinning the convenience/digital focus(Soper, 2024).

UK

Starbucks caters to socially responsible and premium-based consumers in the largest cities like London, Manchester, and Birmingham where the highest level of demand is presented to high-quality coffee and sustainable brands. The brand targets those customers who appreciate the idea of comfortable coffee rooms, a Wi-Fi connection, barista, the incentives of a reusable cup, and the use of ethically sourced products (Statista, 2024b). Increased use of digital ordering enhances social culture in the store, as opposed to eliminating it.

Positioning

USA

Starbucks identifies itself as a high quality but affordable lifestyle brand, which provides personalised drinks, uninterrupted digital communication, and quick in-store services. It supports a new third place consistent appeal and focuses more on convenience-based innovation including mobile ordering, curbside pickup and AI-informed personalisation via the app (Starbucks, 2024a). This positioning is in line with the current U.S consumer trend towards digitally enhanced service and individual beverage alterations.



Figure 2: Perceptual Map

(Source: starbucks, 2021)

In this perceptual map, the major branded coffee chains in the United States are strategized in terms of both price and brand image. Starbucks is an expensive and mature brand and the Dunkin one depicts low expense and youth. Dutch Bros and The Human Bean are focused on young shoppers, Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf focus on their mature customer, who is value conscious.

UK

Starbucks sells itself in UK as a high-end, socially-conscious coffeehouse offering ethically sourced drinks, sustainable packaging programs, and community-oriented store designs (starbucks, 2021). The brand focuses on environmental promises, plant-based menu development, and Fairtrade sourcing communication, reflecting the UK image with the consumers, including transparency, sustainability, and social impact.

Evidence

USA

The U.S. approach of Starbucks is justified by a high level of online engagement, as the company has more than 34 million loyalty members and almost half of the revenues come through users of the Rewards program. Approximately 70 % of stores have drive through service and over 29 % of orders are made through mobile platform, which is an indication of good targeting of convenience-conscious, technologically-oriented consumers.

UK

Starbucks' UK operations demonstrated strong post-pandemic recovery, reporting £449.3 million in revenue for the year ending 2 October 2022, representing a 37% year-on-year increase, according to its latest filed accounts at Companies House (Starbucks, 2023). The growth reflects rising in-store visits and strengthened consumer engagement with premium and ethical coffee offerings.

Key Comparative Insight

The comparison of strategies employed by Starbucks in the USA and the UK reveals that the brand strategies vary in reaction to the cultural expectation of the markets, economic situation, and consumer behaviour. Starbucks positions itself in the USA in a cluster of speed, convenience and digital integration, which is backed by high rates of mobile-orders and high loyalty programme activity. This is in accordance with American taste of efficiency and personalised beverages which is expressed with research indicating that the U.S consumers value fast service and personalisation (Soper, 2024). On the other hand, the UK market focuses on the cafe atmosphere, socially responsible sourcing and community-based areas. Research has proved that British consumers are more interested in sustainable consumption and in-store social experience. The USA also offers a bigger and more digitally developed market economically, but the UK is under inflationary pressure, and here Starbucks has to balance between premium pricing and price perception. The U.S. is the top country in terms of digital ordering, and the UK should have a hybrid of digital interaction with the customer and a high-quality store experience (MacDonnell, 2022). These differences unveil that the competitive advantage of Starbucks lies in its capacity to ensure the global brand and provide products, store design, and communication styles to suit the expectations of the local markets in each particular country.

Comparison of Marketing Mix Strategies in the USA and the UK

Starbucks is a global brand with differentiation of its 7P's to the market. In the USA, it pays attention to convenient, drive-through, and loyalty to mobile apps. In the UK more focus is placed on the ethical procurement, regional menus and local ambience. The high pricing and online advertisements are being used in both the markets to maximize customer contact.

7Ps Analysis:

Product

United States

Intensive focus on customisation (latte custom options, seasonal flavours). Premium beverages are sold in the U.S. segment (North America 75% of revenue) (starbucks, 2024). Starbucks has large product lines and extensive customisation opportunities such as various flavour products, sizes, syrups, milk options, and seasonal products which are differentiated to meet the tastes of the U.S. market. Fits product differentiation theory local customisation enhances the feeling of value and contributes to price premiums. The Iced Brown Sugar Oatmilk Shaken Espresso, common in the U.S. and widely customised by the customer, is often altered with additional shots, replaced by vanilla cold foam, or altered in the level of sweetness. It shows the high level of customisation of Starbucks and justifies high prices in the U.S. market.



Figure: Iced Brown Sugar Oatmilk Shaken Espresso

(Source: starbucks, 2024a)

Branding Strategy



Figure 3: Branding Strategy

(Source: self-Created)

The U.S. branding of Starbucks is based on speed, digital convenience and personalisation with support of the Starbucks Rewards app, mobile ordering and drive-thru format. The brand offers itself as the high-end lifestyle coffeehouse, sells limited-edition beverages, offers personalised digital incentives and contemporary store designs. Its branding focuses on convenience, innovation and custom beverage identity and targets an on-the-go, tech-savvy American customer.

United Kingdom

Increasing the use of plant-based and ethically sourced products; UK revenue FY 2023: £547.7m (up 21.9%)(starbucks, 2024a). Product width consists of ethical, plant-based and regional products, whereas depth is further extended with a variety of dietary choices, flavour tailorings and menu changes with sustainability in focus.

Globalisation / adaptation: product localisation is in response to local taste and ethical preferences, which enhances brand fit.



Figure 4: Branding Strategy

(Source: self-Created)

Branding Strategy

The UK branding of Starbucks focuses on the ethics, sustainability and community experience. Messaging concentrates on Fairtrade sourcing, alternative, plant-based, waste-reduction programmes and on-Greener Stores. The UK branding is used to make Starbucks a friendly, socially responsible third-place with the focus on ambience, inclusiveness and environmental responsibility as the key values to be promoted to the UK consumer who places ethical buying and cafe-based socialization at the highest priority.

Price

United States

Premium pricing that is based on loyalty and the fact that members are loyal: Rewards members contributed a substantial portion of U.S revenue (33.8M active U.S. members in FY2024). Mobile promotions through application (starbucks, 2024b). Pricing width includes premium and discounted products whereas depth includes reward pricing that is personalised, dynamic application offers and different value levels with frequent customers.

Price discrimination / yield management: Loyalty programs enable price differentiation and increase ARPU among high-frequency buyers.

United Kingdom

High end positioning but increased sensitivity to price because of inflation and cost-of-living pressures; value bundles and promotions to retain customers (Grandview Research, 2024). Pricing is between high-end drinks and value packages; depth consists of promotions, area-based price changes, and loyalty schemes to deal with the sensitivity due to inflation.

Value-based pricing & fairness: needs to strike a balance between margin and perceived value in a price-sensitive market.

Place



Figure 5: Starbucks place & channel Strategy

(Source: Gursimrankaur Mehar et al, 2024)

United States

Drive-thrus, mobile pickup lanes and high urban/suburban density; the US has thousands of stores run by the company. (US stores focussed; drive-thru prevalence) (Gursimrankaur Mehar et al, 2024).

Channel design & convenience theory: physical distribution altered to on the go consumption to maximise frequency. Store width is comprised of drive-thru, mobile-

only, suburban and urban outlets; depth is dissimilar pickup formats, layout efficiency and high-density geographic coverage.

United Kingdom

High street, sit-in cafe, and community focus; reduced proportion of drive-thru vs US; the UK store growth is ongoing, but sites are carefully chosen (Walsh, 2024). Location Place width is high-street, mall and community cafes; depth is sit-in formats, neighbourhood integration, different store sizes, location-specific ambience priorities.

Third-place theory: The UK consumers are attracted to cafes and community, layout and physical evidence play very important role..

Country	Direct Channels	Indirect Channels
United States	Company-operated stores, drive-thru outlets, mobile order & pickup stores, in-store café service	Licensed stores, partnerships with grocery retailers, delivery platforms (UberEats, DoorDash), ready-to-drink products in supermarkets
United Kingdom	High-street Starbucks stores, company-operated cafés, sit-in formats, community café spaces	Licensed stores, franchise partners, supermarket RTD products, food delivery apps (Deliveroo, Just Eat, UberEats)

Table 1: Direct & Indirect Channels – USA vs UK (Starbucks)

(Source: Self-Created)

Market Entry Methods

United States

In the U.S. market, Starbucks could theoretically think over a number of market entry strategies to enlarge specialised formats or new product lines:

Licensing

Permission to position in airports, universities, and supermarkets. Minimal capital risk and fast growth. Ensures brand presence in controlled situations.

Recommended Method: Licensing

The U.S. strategy that is best is licensing as it maintains brand standards and allows quick growth in a variety of locations with less operational risk.

Advantage

Licensing will enable Starbucks to grow fast in airports, university and supermarket locations with minimal financial risk. Starbucks is able to expand without having to bear heavy capital expenses because licensed partners will invest in the setting up of the stores (Ćosić and Hibler, 2021). The approach also promotes good brand exposure in the busy places as well as sustaining key brand standards in the operations.

Disadvantage

Licensing will decrease the direct influence of Starbucks on day-to-day operations in stores, the quality of service and management of employees. Weak brand experience may be caused by inconsistent delivery by licensees (Koo et al, 2025). As partners are independent, Starbucks does not have the ability to completely impose uniform training or customer service quality, thus leading to the fact that the quality of stores varies across various licensed stores.

United Kingdom

Starbucks has grown in the UK using various entry modes that are appropriate to the UK competitive coffee market.:

Franchising

Very successful in United Kingdom where the local operators are very effective and the local market is well understood. Allows fast growth in high-street and residential locations.

Recommended Method: Franchising

The UK ideal franchising is that it utilises the local talent, it is fast growing and flexible to the local consumer behaviour and high-street response.

Advantage

Franchising facilitates rapid UK national growth as locally knowledgeable operators are involved who have knowledge on regional consumer behaviour. This minimizes operational risk and allows Starbucks to gain access to high-street and suburban locations in an efficient manner. Franchise partners use their capital and Starbucks is able to expand its network without compromising the brand image.

Disadvantage

Franchising does not give Starbucks direct control over the running of stores and the way staff members practice thus making it difficult to assure all outlets complete uniformity. Decisions made by local franchise may not necessarily be in line with the international standards at Starbucks (Bodkin, 2023). The difference in quality,

operations and a lagging pace in adopting new company initiatives may undermine the consistency in customer experience that Starbucks strives to achieve.

Promotion

United States

App-first promotion, personal offers and push messages; mobile orders take more and more transactions (starbucks, 2024c). The app, social media, email and in-store promotions form part of promotional width, and personalised message, segmented offers and continuous engagement on digital rewards make up promotional depth.

Integrated marketing communications/ relationships marketing: digital CRM encourages retention, data-based targeting.

United Kingdom

The communications focus on sustainability, transparency of sourcing and community programmes; digital ordering increasing but not dominating as often as US (Tolegenov et al., 2024). Promotional width covers are used to support sustainability campaigns, community communications and digital, depth consists of ethical story telling, transparency-based communication and location-specific interactions.

Cause-related marketing and CSR signalling: promotion develops trust and is consistent with the UK consumer values.

People

United States

Employees trained on speed/service throughput; there is labour tension and unionisation contributing to HR complexity (2023-24 unionisation events). The spans of people include baristas, managers and digital support people and include depth of specialised training levels, speed focused positions and workforce variations related to unionisation.

Service management theory: the ability of the staff determines the quality of the service; HR risk influences costliness and reliability.

United Kingdom

The customer facing service focuses on hospitality and cafe experience; the tightening of labour laws and national living wage affect HR strategies (Giousmpasoglou, 2024)

. People width encompass the staff and supervisors involved in hospitality; depth entails training regarding customer experience, practice ethics and adherence to the labour standards in the UK.

Service encounter theory: the behaviour of the staff affects perceived ambience and repeat patronage; complies raise the cost of running operations.

Process

United States

Mobile ordering, loyalty checkout, workflow customisation of orders; process optimisation facilitates high throughput and customisation. Mobile ordering, custom workflows and loyalty checkout are used as breadth whereas speed optimisation, order accuracy systems and digital integration are used as depth. One of the dimensions of physical evidence is width which encompasses signage, store formats and digital interfaces; depth covers layout variations, equipment types and speed centred design items.

Service operations: the variability and cost per transaction are minimised by the standardised digital processes.

United Kingdom

Processes facilitate sit-in service (greater dwell times), accuracy and sustainability of orders (e.g.: recycling/reusable programs). Process width involves sit-in service, sustainability procedures and order handling and depth involves recycling routines and longer dwell protocols and experience enhancing service steps. Physical evidence width includes ambience features, sustainability cues and seating options, depth extends to the variations of the decor, greener-store material and at-ease features.

Experience design: It is necessary to create processes that facilitate leisure consumption and ethical service indications.

Physical evidence



Figure 6:USA Starbucks

(Source: Durbin, 2025)

United States

Fast service design, functional layouts, drive through signage; style of less significance than speed; shopping store redesign to be warmer (2025 turnaround plan) (Durbin, 2025).

Servicescape theory: in the US there is a focus on utilitarian indicators (speed/efficiency) but not long dwell-time setting.



Figure 7: UK starbucks

(Source: Page, 2024)

United Kingdom

The focus on store atmosphere, seating, design and sustainability credentials (greener store programmes in EMEA) (Page, 2024).

Servicescape & brand hints: ambience is an indication of brand values and promotes dwell time and social usage.

Similarities

Both markets focus on high-quality coffee experiences, robust digitalisation, loyalty programmes, as well as customisation. Starbucks has a uniform global branding with focus on quality, ethical sourcing and interaction with customers. The format of stores, the menu contents and promotions are adapted to the preferences of the locals in accordance with the global standards. They both have used omnichannel distribution, personalisation based on data, and trained staff to provide efficient differentiated service and a good presence on the brand.

Differences

The U.S. emphasizes speed, online convenience, drive-thrus, personalised promotions and heavy throughput procedures, as part of on-the-go culture. The UK focuses on ethical sourcing, vegan products, sit-in atmosphere, community-oriented branding and sustainability. The U.S. has a premium-driven pricing, and the customers in the UK need value sensitivity. The design of stores, process and promotion story varies, and they match the cultural requirements and consumption behaviour of each market.

Comparative summary

Starbucks aligns its 7Ps to local requirements. In the USA the focus is the customisation of the product and speedy services; the price is based on loyalty-driven premiums; the place is based on drive-thrus and compact store layouts; promotion is based on digital personalisation through the app; people are taught to move fast; process is based on mobile order and picking up; and the physical evidences point out the convenience. The UK product lineups are more plant-based and ethically sourced, pricing is focused on a premium position and value offers, place is based on high-street and sit-in formats, promotion is sustainability-focused, people are focused on hospitality, process and longer in-store stay are promoted

through physical evidence (grandviewresearch, 2024b). These changes indicate the variance in consumer values, adoption of technology and pressures of regulation and enable a local strategy that compromises on global brand consistency and local responsiveness.

Evaluation of the performance of marketing strategies

The total fiscal performance of Starbucks is generally big but mixed regionally. The Starbucks consolidated net revenues were recorded to be around 9.07 billion dollars in fiscal 2024 globally, with North America accounting 3/4th of the group revenues, and the U.S. market is regarded as strategic. Starbucks is a well-known international coffeehouse brand with a net revenue of US \$35.98 billion in the 2023 full year with a growth of 11.6% compared to 2022, indicating that Starbucks has a robust brand presence globally and can leverage its marketing strategies to suit the different international markets (macrotrends, 2024). Starbucks has generated a huge revenue in the UK alone in the year to 1 October 2023 of £547.7 million, an increase of 21.9 % (starbucks, 2024).

Starbucks — United States (performance evidence)

The U.S. operations are the basis of most revenues: the company-operated store revenues in North America (primarily U.S.) amount to approximately 5.5 billion in 2024 (75% of the group). Online implementation constitutes one of the significant sources of revenue: 31 percent of the U.S. transactions were made through the Starbucks application as of late 2023/early 2024, and active U.S. Rewards membership was 34.3 million, which serves as an illustration of how digital platforms boost the frequency and amount of expenditures (Wassel, 2024). Market-share estimates indicate that Starbucks controls the specialty/chain coffee market with industry analysis pointing out Starbucks to enjoy the biggest share (reported 55) in the branded/chain listings in the U.S. market. Such dominance helps the high visibility and bargaining power to suppliers.

Starbucks — United Kingdom (performance evidence)

The annual report on Starbucks UK shows that it has achieved an outstanding 21.9 year on year revenue growth of the year ending 1 Oct 2023, total revenue of £547.7 million, and the growth in pre-tax profitability indicates a strong recovery and growth in the UK market. The UK network consists of 1,168 stores (company-owned and licensed ones), and the EMEA region, on the whole, demonstrates accelerated

revenue and profitability growth (starbucks, 2024b). All these metrics demonstrate well-executed retail in UK and market penetration.

Digital sales & loyalty impact

The percentage of digital sales (mobile orders and app transactions) are higher in the U.S.; the 31 percent mobile-order share in stores owned by the company reflects a developed model of digital commerce that is generating increased per-customer purchases and better operational efficiency (Soper, 2024b). In comparison, UK demonstrates an increasing usage of digital but still depends more on in-store feeling (sit-in/high-street) and sustainability communication. The more robust U.S. digital environment translates to more frequency and ARPU (average revenue) to Starbucks in the North American market.

Social media & brand awareness

Starbucks has extremely high brand recognition worldwide; its Instagram page has millions of subscribers, which the company uses to endorse the product and launch new ones. The level of social engagement informs the promotional breadth of Starbucks in both nations but translates more into transactions in the U.S. thanks to the built-in ecosystem of apps.

Consumer satisfaction & reputationsatisfaction of consumers & reputation.

According to customer-satisfaction indices, Starbucks has a relatively high score in the U.S. ACSI ratings Starbucks at the high-70s index, which means that the company is well-satisfied with its customers as opposed to other food-service brands. YouGov BrandIndex and other trackers indicate a decent brand sentiment in the UK but are more sensitive in the areas of value and sustainability. These data imply that the level of satisfaction in both markets is high, however, the U.K. and the U.S. have different priorities among customers.

Analysis of Market Superiority and Underlying Factors

The U.S. market is also more successful (quantitatively) in absolute revenue, digital monetisation (North America 75% of group revenues; higher mobile-order penetration and larger rewards membership) and provides Starbucks with better ARPU and operational leverage. Nevertheless, in the UK, the growth rates and profitability gains are more pronounced and positive during FY2023, and this indicates an effective localisation and expansion policy (starbucks, 2024c). The scale, maturity in digital, greater market share are the U.S. advantage, and targeted

local adaptations (product, store format and sustainability focus) are the strength of the UK.

Strategic drivers

The crucial strategic reinforceers of the performance of Starbucks encompass their digital-first and loyalty-centred business model in the United States that raise the frequency and expenditure of customers. Conversely, UK enjoys streamlined high-street models and localisation and sustainability. All these methods justify improvements in volume and margins in U.S and greater growth and trust-based profitability in U.K.

Evaluation of marketing ethics practice

Ethical Sourcing and Supply Chain Responsibility

Starbucks has been advocating its moral sourcing practice using the Coffee and Farmer Equity Practices, yet some of the researchers have doubts on the intensity and clarity of these assertions. Studies have shown that certification programmes do not necessarily lead to fair wage or better working conditions to farmers in Latin America and Africa. Even though 98 percent of Starbucks coffee is listed publicly as ethically sourced, detractors say that smallholder farmers are exposed to global price fluctuations, and sustainability advantages are also disproportionately allocated to big suppliers (McIntyre et al, 2022). Ethical sourcing is a high consumer power in the UK market because of the increased awareness of social justice and sustainability. Inability to show transparency can hurt brand trust worse than in the case of the United States. Therefore, even though Starbucks portrays itself as a good global seller, the issue of sourcing ethically is still multifaceted, and there are still issues related to the welfare of workers, traceability, and economic empowerment of farmers.

Labour Issues and Workplace Ethics (U.S. Unionisation)

One of the most significant ethical issues in the U.S. are connected with labour practices of Starbucks and the process of unionisation which is gaining momentum. Since 2021, more than 350 Starbucks locations in the United States have petitioned to have their stores unionized, claiming poor staffing, inconsistent hours, and low pay, among other things. The labour watchdogs have published reports that show that Starbucks has been accused of anti-union practices such as closing down of stores and disciplinary measures on organisers, which Starbucks denies (Canella,

2023). These concerns present significant moral conflict since Starbucks markets itself as a company of fairness and values of the community. The UK has relatively tougher labour laws, such as the National Living Wage and robust employee-protection policies, which minimizes the chances of such conflicts. Nevertheless, brand image and labour practice are ethically mismatched in the U.S. which has created poor publicity, endangering the Starbucks brand and casting doubt on the ethical soundness of its human-resource approach.

Environmental Impact and Marketing Ethics

Starbucks has made various moves in the United Kingdom to minimise its impact on the environment yet it is a company that also has ethical issues with regards to its operations.

Ethical practice example (UK):

Starbucks has increased its Greener Stores programme in the UK, which has placed emphasis on energy efficient equipment, water saving technology and recycled materials in its stores. In 2023, Starbucks has launched the EMEA Greener Store of the Year, which utilizes less-carbon materials, offers to reuse cups with a discount, and less waste in-store (Starbucks, 2024). According to Starbucks, the sustainability activities would contribute to reducing the environmental footprint of each store and contribute to the UK environmental objectives.

Unethical practice example (UK):

Starbucks was also accused of tax avoidance in the UK, despite projecting the image of a social responsible brand. Starbucks has been paying minimal corporation tax in the country, which led to public outrage even though it has been operating in the country over the years (Carter et al, 2022). It is reported that the accounting techniques employed in Starbucks included paying royalty to the other Starbucks companies thereby cutting down on its taxable income in the UK. According to critics, this kind of behaviour contradicts the ethical image of Starbucks as a brand *[refer to appendix 3]*.

Recommendation & Conclusion

Recommendation

Starbucks would have to balance the global consistency in their brands and more local adaptation to remain competitive in USA and UK. The company must increase AI-based personalisation in the USA via its app, as McDonald utilized Dynamic Yield

technology that generated more personalised menu recommendations and transaction value (MCS, 2023). This has the ability to build loyalty and online revenue. Starbucks also needs to focus on constant labour issues by following the example of Costco that has managed to reach high levels of employee satisfaction and low turnover through increased wages and transparent HR policies. Starbucks should go a step further in its sustainability efforts in the UK, where reusable cup offers and reduction of food-waste have proven effective at Pret A Manger. Enhanced UK consumer trust will be further developed by clear ethical sourcing communication and further plant-based menu options.

Recommendation for the USA

1. Improve Digital Personalisation Using AI

Starbucks USA is recommended to enhance its digital personalisation through the application of more powerful AI systems in the mobile application. This has the capacity to enhance average order value and repeat visits. An example that comes in handy is that of McDonalds, which employed AI technology of Dynamic Yield to customise the drive through menus, according to time, weather and customer behaviour. This drove sales since customers were given more relevant suggestions (Mastercard Data & Services, 2023). A similar Starbucks system would suggest beverages on the basis of past orders, seasons or diet. AI can also decrease the waiting time in anticipating popular drinks during rush times. Further personalisation will assist Starbucks to compete in the market where fast service and personalisation are relevant.

2. Strengthen Employee Welfare and Reduce Union Conflicts

Starbucks USA has its share of criticism on labour problems and union strains. An obvious answer is to invest more in the welfare of employees, their training and reasonable schedules. Costco provides a very good example. Studies indicate that Costco experiences more satisfaction and lesser turnover among employees since they are above-industry pay, well-benefitted, and the HR policies are clear. Such practices develop trust, and conflict at the workplace is minimized (Canella, 2023). Starbucks can follow the same pattern and enhance hourly wages, develop regular schedules, and invest more in training baristas. This would help to minimize union conflicts, enhance the brand image, and raise the service quality. Customer loyalty can also be enhanced by treating the workers better.

3. Expand Sustainable Packaging and Reusable Cup Programs

Starbucks USA must increase the use of sustainable packaging as the consumer awareness of waste is on the rise. One of the benchmarks that can be useful is the 2025 sustainable packaging plan of Coca-Cola, which states that it will produce bottles that can be recycled 100 percent and will expand the number of refillable options. The approach taken by Coca-Cola indicates that even the most giant organizations can change the consumption habits when they offer convenient and affordable solutions (Coca-Cola, 2025). The same strategies can be embraced by Starbucks in the USA based on the augmentation of reusable cups, growth of recycling alliances, and the use of more compostable items. This will assist in mitigating the criticism of waste in disposable cups. Such activities would also help Starbucks be in line with the increasing U.S confidence in brands that are environmentally friendly.

Recommendation for the UK

1. Increase Plant-Based Menu Expansion

Sustainable and plant-based products are popular among the UK consumers, and thus Starbucks needs to augment its plant-based foods and beverages. Another good example of success in the UK market is Pret A Manger. Pret opened its own plant-based menu stores, called Veggie Pret, and they were well-received by consumers (BBC, 2024). It has been reported that plant-based products assisted Pret in winning the attention of younger and health-conscious consumers. Starbucks can pursue this strategy by increasing the number of dairy-free options, vegan bakery, and plant-based meals. This would be in line with the increasing demand of the UK in ethical and healthy products. These changes will also be able to reinforce the claim of sustainability made by Starbucks and make it compete with brands which already provide strong vegan cuisine.

2. Strengthen Local Community and In-Store Experience

Starbucks UK ought to enhance its approach of community store experience since British customers appreciate comfort, the social space and the local touch. Costa Coffee has already achieved this through the designing of its stores according to their neighbourhoods and sponsoring local charity events. The Community Programme and redesigned stores by Costa helped the company to increase the customer loyalty and build brand trust. The same model that can be adopted by Starbucks is to host local events, make seating comfortable, add quiet work zones, and make partnerships and community engagement more frequent (Costa Coffee,

2021). This would enhance the experience of the third place that the UK customers desire. An improved local presence would help distinguish Starbucks among the fast-service competitors and support the image of the brand as high-end and community-related.

3. Increase Transparency in Ethical Sourcing

Ethical sourcing is important to the Starbucks UK customers, and therefore the company should enhance the supply chain transparency. An example in point is the case of Tony Choclonely, a chocolate company that has been publishing all supply-chain information, such as income and anti-exploitation activities of farmers. This open approach has brought them closer to customers and enhanced brand reputation (Tony's Choclonely, 2022). Starbucks can adopt this pattern by releasing more transparent reports on how they pay their farmers, the source of coffee beans and their development towards the long-term sustainability targets. That would assist in alleviating social anxieties on inappropriate salaries in coffee cultivation. It is also in line with the increasing UK demands of ethical and open brands.

Conclusion

In general, the comparison reveals that Starbucks is successful in adjusting its strategies to the local needs of USA and UK markets. The American advantage is size, electronic savvy and convenience formats whereas the British accentuate ethical buying, coffee and environmentally friendly settings. Starbucks has managed to sustain its performance in both regions at an excellent rate by balancing its global identity and local responsiveness. Further investment in digital innovation, ethical behavior and customer-centric design will become a necessity in the future. Based on the findings, the success of the international marketing at Starbucks has not only been determined by the strength of the brand, but also by its capacity to strategically address the socio-cultural, regulatory and environmental variations of different markets.

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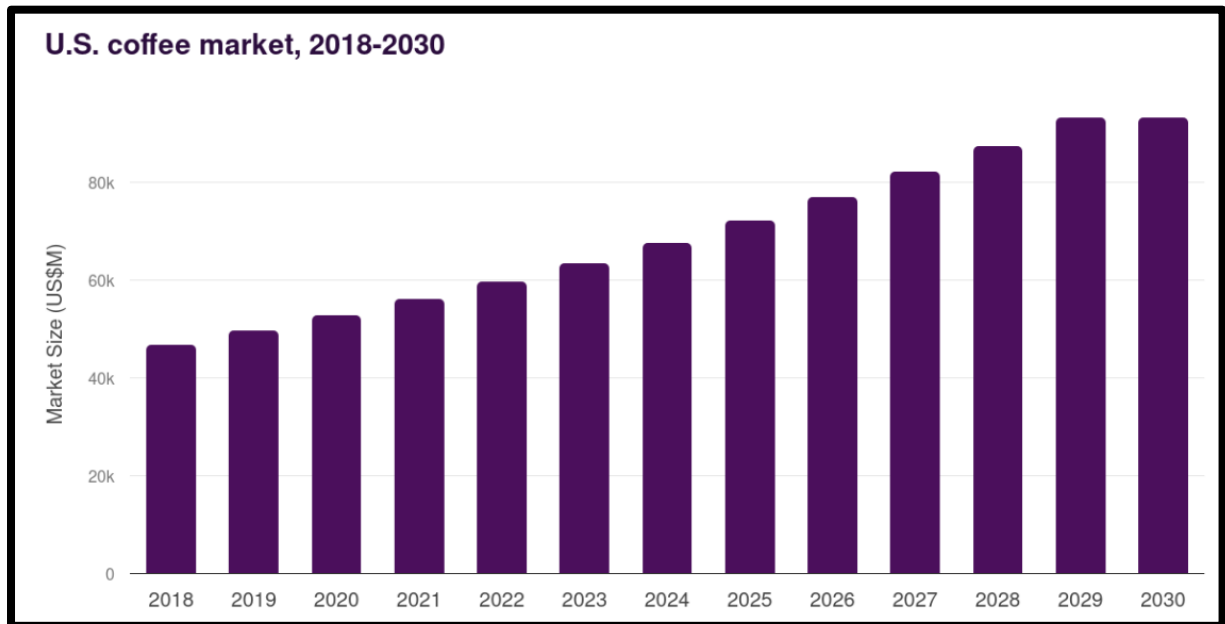
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Appendices

Appendix 1: U.S. Coffee Market



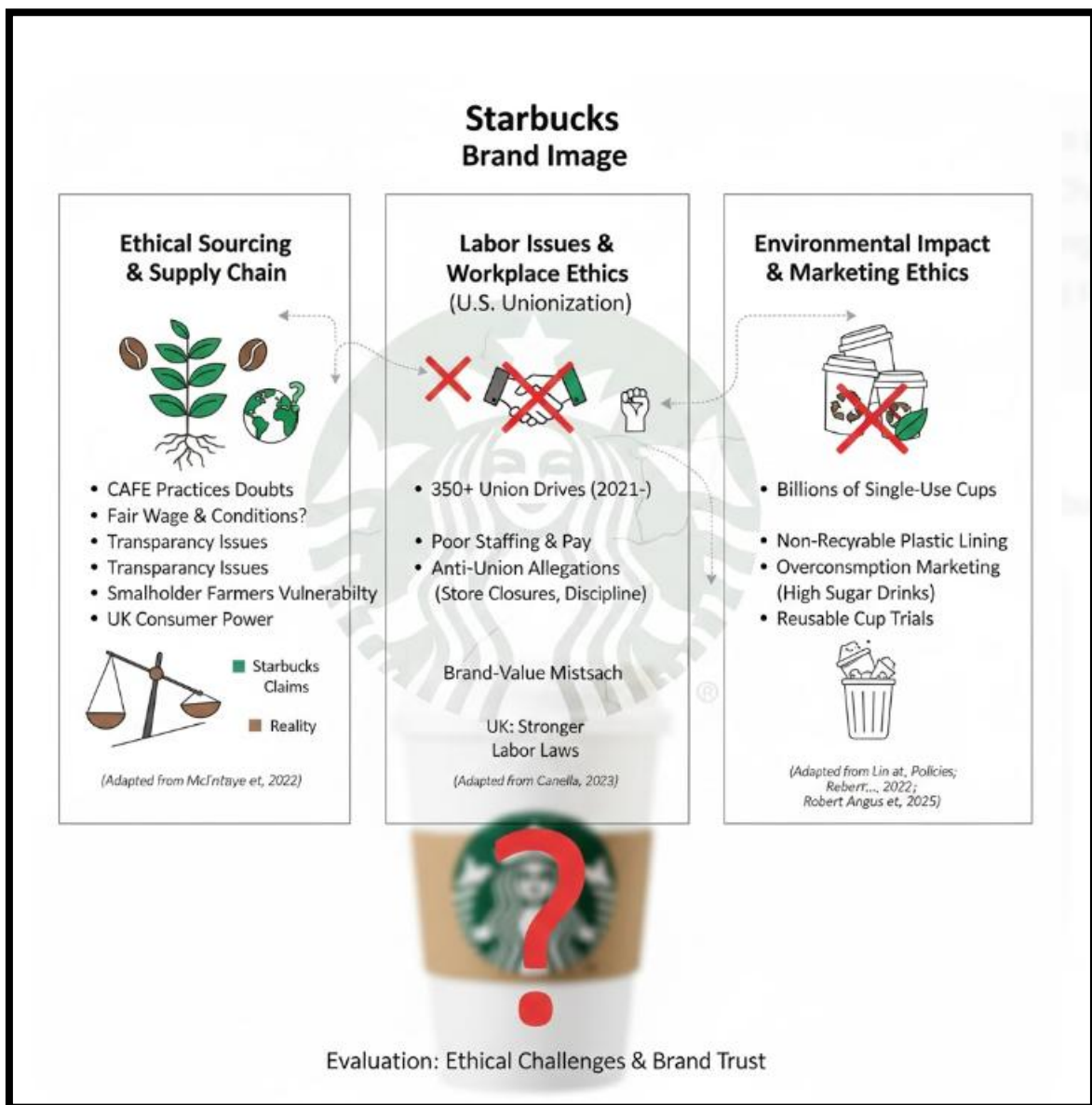
(Source: grandviewresearch, 2025)

Appendix 2: Brand Overview



(Source: Brown, 2021)

Appendix 3: Evaluation of Starbucks' Marketing Ethics Practices



(Source: McIntyre et al, 2022)