**Starbucks Focus Group Research**

**IMC 611 Marketing Research and Analysis**

Starbucks, maker of specialty coffees, sales are slipping in many locations, and management believes they may have overbuilt. They are exploring converting a portion of Starbucks locations into cafes with limited seating that serve fresh and natural foods in box lunches, and a line of fresh fruit juice drinks. Management wants consumer reactions to these ideas, and marketing research has chosen to conduct two-hour focus groups in major metropolitan areas.

**Research objectives**

- Determine the appeal of coffee, local coffee houses, chain coffee houses, and Starbucks
- Determine interest in 100 percent pure juices, fresh foods, organic foods and natural products
- Investigate appeal and need for healthy cafes by demographics, psychographics, lifestyles, etc.
- Understand consumers’ purchases regarding lunch outside the home or office
- Consider meals to-go, pre-packaged, and limited seating
- Find establishments that meet similar needs and likelihood consumers would seek Starbucks’
- Determine whether a healthy smart café should carry Starbucks brand or branch out to sub-brand

Marketing research will moderate focus group sessions with 8 to 10 respondents for an extended period of time (two hours) to observe and interact with respondents to stimulate a richer response on the possibility of Starbucks sub-brand cafes that serve fresh and natural food and juices in to-go boxed lunches. Focus groups can acquire qualitative information by challenging respondents and illuminating conflicting opinions. The subject matter is not sensitive that respondents will temper responses or withhold information, and the volume of issues to cover is not extensive. Researchers should ask 20 to 25 questions allowing respondents 30 seconds to answer and interact in an open dialogue.

**Recruitment criteria**

Respondents should be ages of 24 and 64 and reside in or near a metropolitan area heavily populated with Starbucks store locations. Researchers should seek a diverse group ranging from light to heavy coffee users, students and professionals, and health conscious individuals and individuals not concerned with healthy lifestyles (Starbucks, 2009).

1. Do you or anyone in your family work for the Starbucks Corporation?
2. Select the age group that describes you. (Pick only age group 25-64.)
3. Do you work full-time or part-time outside of the home? (Discard homemakers and retirees.)
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Keep high school graduates and above.)
5. Select an annual income range.
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, how health conscious are you?
7. Do you consume lunch outside of the home?
8. Have you participated in market research studies, like panel discussions, focus groups or surveys, in the last 12 months?

**Discussion topics**

**Attitudes and feelings**

1. How do you feel about the following? Coffee, local coffee houses, chain coffee houses and Starbucks.
2. How do you feel about the following? Natural products, 100 percent pure fruit juices, fresh foods and organic foods.
3. What words or images do you associate with cafes?

**Usage/Purchase of fresh food and beverages**

1. What is your consumption habits regarding the following? Coffee, local coffee houses, chain coffee houses and Starbucks. Likes and dislikes? Brands preferred, why?
2. What is your consumption habits regarding the following? Natural products, 100 percent pure fruit juices, fresh foods and organic foods. Likes and dislikes? Brands preferred, why?
3. Do you consider yourself a health conscious individual? Advantages and disadvantages?
4. Do you seek out establishments that serve fresh products with natural ingredients?
5. When and where would you to purchase the following? Meals made to-go, pre-packaged foods and boxed lunches
6. In what situation would limited seating ideal? Or put you at a disadvantage?

**Lunch consumption outside the home or office**

1. Describe your lunch consumption related to lifestyle, work, geography, etc.
2. What types of food and beverages do you consume? What would you like to consume for lunch? Why?
3. What are you experiences with cafes serving fresh foods and beverages?
4. What is the likelihood you would attend a café inspired by healthy lifestyles that was not associated with Starbucks?
5. What is some important brand attributes associated with cafes?

**Attitudes toward a Starbucks Café**

1. What are your experiences with Starbucks?
2. What is some important brand attributes associated with Starbucks?
3. What is the likelihood that you would seek a Starbucks Café that served fresh and natural food and beverages?
4. Product characteristics? Taste, nutritional benefits, packaging preferences, pricing, promotion

**Reactions to Starbucks Café products taste test**

1. Overall reactions to juice, food and packaging? Taste, texture, shape, quality, size, color, feel (McDaniel, 2008).
Metropolitan areas and focus group facilities
Seattle, Wa. - The Starbucks Corporation headquarters and original Starbucks are located in Seattle, and the metropolitan area is one of the top ten Starbucks and coffee shop saturated cities in the United States on the west coast. Consumer Opinion Services Inc., located at 12825 First Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98168, www.cosvc.com, offers 45 years of focus group research with facilities, recruiting capabilities, moderating and taste testing, and advantage for testing the Starbucks Café line of products on hometown consumers (Consumer, 2009).

Denver, Colo. - Another highly populated Starbucks city that is centered in the United States to reach a more diverse demographic in a suburban location nestled in the mountains of Boulder. The Boulder Focus Center, located at 4940 Pearl East Circle, Suite 103, Boulder, CO 80301, www.boulderfocuscenter.com, offers a focus group facility with full-service market research, including food and beverage service, recruitment, professional facilitation, audio-visual recording, interviewing, and in-depth analysis. One of its advantages is its potential audiences that include early adopters, business executives, college students, health-conscious individuals, natural product users, and highly educated consumers (Boulder, 2009).

Washington, D.C. - A centralized business/metropolitan area with high saturation of Starbucks locations on the east coast that also reaches surrounding suburban areas. Edge Research, Inc., located at 1555 Wilson Blvd., Suite 602, Arlington, VA 22209, www.edgeresearch.com, is an ideal full-service marketing research group that has the abilities to investigate attitude, usage, and brand research, such as brand loyalty and satisfaction, brand positioning, customer satisfaction, and new product research in concept development and testing (Edge, 2009).

References


