Communication in Social Media

The Starbucks Experience

A Thesis by Anders Secher

MA in International Business Communication

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine how Starbucks' use of communication in social media affects the company's image as perceived by its customers. The reason for this specific problem focus has been an interest in how a large company as Starbucks uses communication strategically in different social media channels in its interactions with the customers who follow the company online, and what the outcome is for both Starbucks and its customers. In addition, it is also interesting to examine if the specific use of communication has any influence on the customers' perceptions of Starbucks.

To shed light on this issue, qualitative research methods and data were applied in order to create a more thorough and in-depth analysis of few Starbucks' customers understanding and perceptions of the company's online communication, and what impact the results had on the customers' perceptions of Starbucks. To do this, two sub-analyses were conducted which each had a specific purpose.

The first analysis was conducted based on text extracts from three social media channels used by Starbucks which were its Facebook fan page, corporate blog, and forum for idea sharing and development. The findings of this analysis indicated that Starbucks applies different types of communication strategies in each of the three social media channels based on three different purposes. On Facebook, Starbucks focuses on creating emotional content in their posts which targets the users' immediate feelings in an effort to affect the users' attitudes and behaviour towards Starbucks and its products. In the corporate blog, Starbucks primarily focuses on informing the users through objective information but to some degree also to influence the users' perceptions of Starbucks by promoting the company and its products. In the forum, the purpose for Starbucks is to collaborate with the users who share and discuss their personal ideas with other users in order to improve Starbucks which in the end should benefit both the users of the forum and Starbucks.

The second analysis consisted of qualitative, in-depth interviews with four Starbucks customers in order to identify and understand their opinions about the company's use of communication in social media and how this specific use affected their perceptions of Starbucks. The result of the analysis indicated that Starbucks' use of communication in the three social media channels was effective as all four customers had positive perceptions of the content and Starbucks' approach. The customers found it positive that Starbucks focused on creating content that was useful, informative and concerned with many different aspects of the company. They also found it positive that Starbucks attempted to create constructive posts for the users and discussions between them in order to know their opinions about

the company and its products. However, in some instances Starbucks showed a lack of participation which led to negative impressions by both the users in the social media channels and the customers who were interviewed. Overall, it was possible to conclude that the customers' perceptions of Starbucks became slightly more positive based on the company's use of communication in social media.

On the basis of the results of the analyses, it has been suggested that future research should examine Starbucks' use of communication in its other social media channels to get a more comprehensive assessment of the company's general use of online communication. In that connection, a comparison with other companies' use of communication in social media would also be of significant relevance in order to assess if Starbucks' approach is the most effective or should be revised to optimise the online efforts. In addition to these suggestions of future research, specific changes to Starbucks' current approach were also suggested in the thesis. Specifically, it was found necessary for Starbucks to consider its lack of visible presence in various social media channels and its degree of commenting as many users had negative impressions of Starbucks and its way of managing dissatisfied users who demanded answers or justifications for specific decisions made by Starbucks.

1. Introduction

The world we live in is constantly changing around us at what feels like an increasing pace. In recent decades, globalisation and new technologies have influenced the everyday lives of both people and the business world and now impact the way many people think, behave and communicate.

The internet and social media connect people and businesses worldwide, and interactions between them are less dependent on time and place. Access to other people and companies is possible at any time and from anywhere which affect how the interactions between individuals and companies occur and the outcome of these interactions (Brown 2009, 4).

Online and in social media, individuals have numerous possibilities to express themselves to other individuals or companies and in this way increasingly influence other individuals and companies' opinions and behaviour. Furthermore, the emergence of social media and its influence on people's ways of interacting with others has made it one of the most significant and central platforms of communication for both individuals and companies (Ibid., 1-2).

Companies are now aware of the many possibilities that are present with the use of social media and the chance to reach a huge audience at any time and place. However, companies also have to identify and consider the challenges that come with being present online. Customers and other stakeholders are becoming increasingly active and influential online which require that companies listen to and respect the customers' opinions. Companies must also join the online conversations as the customers share opinions and experiences of companies with other users and thereby control more of the communication that shapes the images and brands of companies. In addition, many customers increasingly want their opinions heard and gain more influence on companies' decision-making rather than passively accepting corporate decisions (Ibid., 2-3 & 18-23).

It is clear that companies are dealing with challenges and increasing expectations from customers and other stakeholders who require more attention from and influence on companies. Much of this occurs online in social media, and companies need to consider and manage the wants and needs of their stakeholders through communication and user involvement to ensure happy and satisfied stakeholders who have positive perceptions of the companies.

2. Problem Field

The development and potential challenges of social media outlined in the introduction are very interesting to analyse in order to understand how companies use communication in social media to

address and involve users in order to manage some stakeholders' changing expectations and wants. In connection with this thesis, the focus will be on a single case study of the multinational company Starbucks as it is interesting to examine how a large corporation with many customers uses social media to communicate and connect with users who visit the company's social media channels.

In the Starbucks case it is interesting to examine how Starbucks acts in social media and how the company communicates with users online. More specifically, it is possible that Starbucks applies certain communication strategies based on different motives and with certain purposes in mind, and thus it is interesting to analyse if this is evident from the company's online communication. In addition, it may also be possible to identify and assess any motives behind applying certain communication strategies and what the outcome may be.

It is also interesting to examine if the use of communication and degree of involvement of users by Starbucks in social media have any effect on the users' perceptions of Starbucks. Whether Starbucks actively participates in the online conversations that take place or allow users to take the lead may affect some users' perceptions of Starbucks.

3. Delimitation

As the introduction and problem field result in many interesting topics to analyse, several delimitations have been made in the thesis. Different reasons lie behind these delimitations regarding the content and scope of the thesis in order to narrow the focus and field of study, and thereby improve the depth and quality of the thesis. The most general and important delimitations will now be accounted for.

Social media comprises of numerous different channels which vary in content, structure, way of interacting, etc. Therefore, the decision to focus specifically on Starbucks' use of a social network page, corporate blog and forum was made as these channels are some of the most important to companies among the many different types of social media channels that exist (Safko 2012, 551) and thus are interesting to examine. Other social media channels could have been interesting and relevant to include, but they were excluded to limit the scope of the thesis.

Regarding the company's stakeholders, only one stakeholder group will be focused on which is customers. The reasons for excluding other stakeholders are that customers is one of the company's most important stakeholder groups and thus more interesting to examine than other stakeholder groups as companies spend more resources on customers compared to many other stakeholder groups. At the same time, not many other stakeholder groups have as much influence on a company's

existence as customers, and thus it is critical to understand how this group of stakeholders perceives Starbucks and its use of communication.

In connection with analysing Starbucks' use of communication in social media, a textual analysis of Starbucks' specific use of words would have been a natural addition to include in a communicative analysis. However, this type of analysis has been excluded as the area of interest in the Starbucks case is not the use of specific words or framing but rather the purpose and application of more general communication strategies.

Starbucks is the only case to be analysed in the thesis. A comparative analysis including other companies would have been interesting in order to identify similarities and contrasts in connection with other companies' use of communication in social media. However, the focus is only on Starbucks in order to examine the company's relation with its customers more thoroughly than would have been the case if other companies were included.

In connection with Starbucks' communication, it would also have been interesting to include some of the company's employees in the analysis to examine their perceptions of their own company's way of communicating online. However, this has been excluded as the analysis only has an external focus and revolves around one stakeholder group which is the customers.

The thesis will focus on few, specific customers' perceptions of Starbucks, and as a result of this the focus will be on data quality and depth rather than quantity and breadth, which means that qualitative research and data are central in the thesis. However, quantitative research would have been an interesting aspect to include in order to obtain a broader and more general idea about the effect of Starbucks' communication on its customers.

4. Problem Statement

Based on the problem field and the subsequent delimitations that have been made, the thesis will attempt to answer the following problem statement:

"How does Starbucks' use of communication in social media affect the company's image as perceived by its customers?"

This specific question summarises the wonder and curiosity which lie behind writing the thesis, and it has been created with a background in the introductory sections. The problem statement contains the main themes to be examined and will be the focal point for the entire thesis.

To ease the task of examining and answering the problem statement, few sub-questions will be included to divide the main question. Thereby, the sub-questions will contribute to the analysis of the problem of the thesis. The sub-questions are:

- How does Starbucks use communication in social media? (this question will be analysed in the sub-analysis in section 12.2)
- How does Starbucks' use of communication in social media affect customers' images of Starbucks? (this question will be analysed in the sub-analysis in section 12.3)

5. Project Structure

The purpose of this section is to account for the structure of the thesis by illustrating how the individual sections are connected through a project design in order to improve the reading experience of the thesis. The deductive approach has been applied in the thesis, which generally seen means that the methodological approach and theories required to answer the problem statement will be accounted for prior to being applied on the empirical data. Section 7.1 will elaborate on the application of the deductive approach and its implications for the thesis.
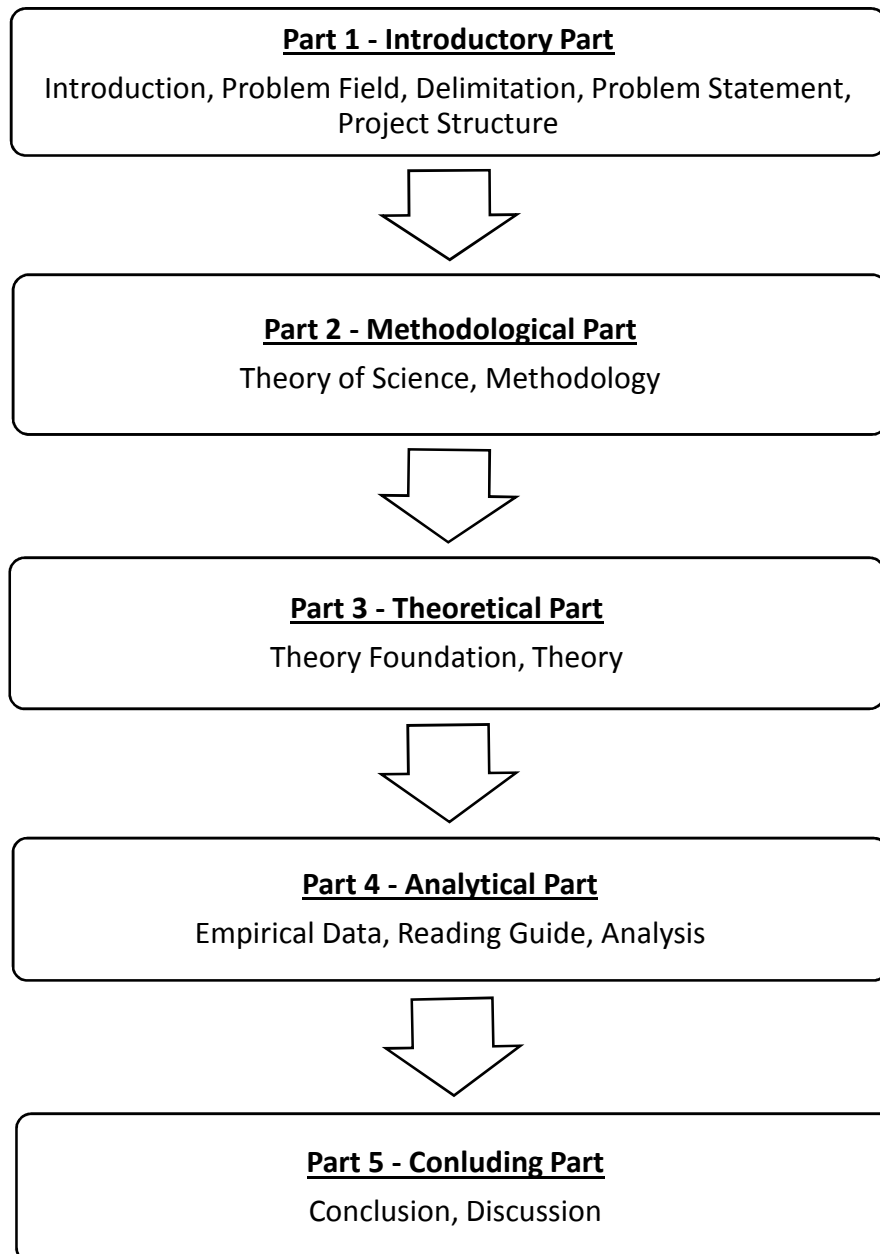
Figure 1: Project structure.

As seen already, part 1 will set the stage by explaining the context in which the thesis will have its focus and by narrowing down the general wonder and curiosity regarding how communication in social media affects individuals' perceptions of companies to a clear and specific problem focus.

Part 2 will account for the methodology applied in the thesis and how the methodological decisions influence the structure and content of the entire thesis.

Part 3 will explain the various theories applied in the thesis and how they connected and relevant in order to create a strong theoretical foundation for analysing the problem of the thesis in the best possible way.

Part 4 will contain a description of the empirical data to be applied in the analysis. Furthermore, this part also includes the sub-analysis of Starbucks' use of communication in social media and a sub-analysis of the qualitative interviews conducted on four Starbucks customers in order to assess how their perceptions of Starbucks are affected by the company's online communication.

Part 5 will answer the problem statement by concluding on the sub-analyses conducted in Part 4. Afterwards, the thesis will be discussed to account for its usefulness and implications in connection with future research.

6. Theory of Science

This section will account for the scientific approach applied in the thesis. The purpose is to clarify and explain the view of science and creation of knowledge throughout the thesis. Thereby a common thread should be created in connection with selection of theories and collection of empirical data as well as the application of the specific theories on the empirical data.

The first part of this section will elaborate on the selected theory of science which is social constructivism. In this part, the social constructivist approach and its main assumptions will be accounted for, and the relevance of this scientific approach to the thesis will be explained. Then, different degrees of social constructivism will be accounted for to contrast the different perceptions of the view of the world and how meaning is constructed. Finally, the applicability of social constructivism to the thesis will be explained.

As the focus in this thesis will be on a deeper understanding of the different perceptions that few individuals have of Starbucks, positivism has not been selected as the scientific approach. A positivist approach would result in a focus on quantitative research methods and statistically calculable data in order to be able to make generalisations about a larger group of individuals rather than an understanding of specific individuals' underlying reasons behind their perceptions. A positivist approach would also result in a view on reality and knowledge as objective and that an absolute truth exists, which contrast with the social constructivist approach as will be explained in the following section (Burr 1995, 3).

6.1 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism derives from constructivism in which reality and understanding are seen as humanly constructed, and it occurs intrapersonally in the minds of individuals. Social constructivism is a further development of constructivism. Instead of only taking place intrapersonally, the construction of reality also occurs interpersonally between individuals through their social interactions (Burr 1995, 4-5).

Social constructivism is a complex and multi-faceted perspective and different types of approaches are distinguished between. Therefore, some confusion of ideas exist, such as confusion about what is actually being constructed, which complicates the understanding of social constructivism and makes it less clear (Rasborg in Fuglsang and Olsen 2004, 350). This confusion also relates to social constructivism's close similarity to other scientific approaches, especially social constructionism. However, some general perceptions do exist which can improve the clarification and understanding of social constructivism (Rasborg in Fuglsang and Olsen 2004, 351 & 385-386).

In the social constructivist approach reality as we know it is a subjective phenomenon, and it exists and is shaped by our recognition of it. Generally, the assumption is that social phenomena emerge and develop through historical and social processes created by people. Because people have created social phenomena, people are also able to influence them through their actions and thereby affect reality. As reality is socially constructed based on different cultural and historical backgrounds our knowledge is subjective and dependent on the specific context. Therefore, knowledge is different to each individual, which means that there is no objective fact or truth that applies to everyone (Burr 1995, 4).

Social constructivism tries to explain how social context affects our understanding of reality. In doing so, language is considered a cornerstone in our social life and in our subjective construction of meaning. Through language we learn to express ourselves and communicate with other individuals, and it is used as a means of socialising with others. Language and communication is culturally determined, and may have different meaning in different cultures and contexts. Language is also perceived as a precondition for thought, and individuals continuously affect each other by constructing their own identity and at the same time affecting others' creation of identity. This emphasises that relationships, identity and our subjective creation of reality is a dynamic and changeable process which is reproduced every day through interaction, culture and language (Ibid., 5).

Focus is also on the importance of interactions between individuals and the social practices they take part in as a means to create social phenomena. This focus also includes a perception that dynamic, social processes are more important than static structures in the creation of reality and understanding,

and knowledge is not perceived as something people have but rather as something they do together through their social interaction (Ibid., 5-6).

In connection with the thesis, the social constructivist approach has been applied as it focuses on the social interactions that occur between people and how these interactions affect the individuals' perceptions and understanding of reality and specific social phenomena. Interaction, language and communication between individuals are seen as the most important elements in the attempt to construct knowledge and meaning, and the result is different to every person due to different cultural backgrounds, languages, and views and understandings of what is true and false. This makes it impossible to generalise individuals' perceptions based on previous studies and thus requires new analyses to answer the problem statement in the thesis. In addition, no objective truth exists, but truth and knowledge are different to everyone and depend on their realisation and perception of reality and the way it is constructed. Therefore, it is interesting to examine how some individuals perceive and experience Starbucks' use of communication and interaction in social media and how it affects the individuals' perceptions of Starbucks.

Four Degrees of Social Constructivism

Social constructivism does not only consist of a single, predominant perspective. Søren Wenneberg (2002, 17-19) states that four types of social constructivism exist and that they should be thought of as different degrees which increasingly affect the way individuals perceive the view and creation of reality and the social processes that occur in our lives. Figure 2 depicts the four degrees of social constructivism.
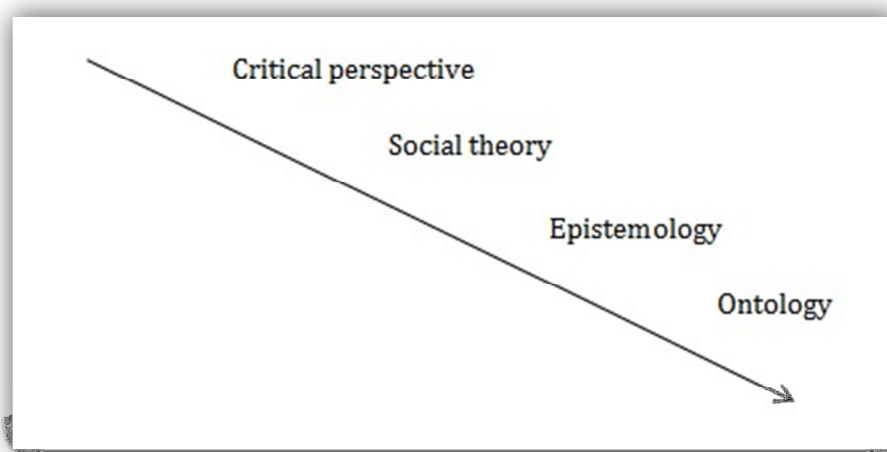

Figure 2: Four degrees of social constructivism (translated from Wenneberg 2002, 135).

Social constructivism can first and foremost be perceived as a critical perspective in which an individual do not take everything for granted but is aware that all things could be constructed

differently, such as by cultural context (Ibid., 18). Secondly, social constructivism may be seen as a social theory. The critical perspective mentioned before is then applied on the social reality or specific social phenomena, not only to be critical but to explain how these elements are constructed and work by using different theories about the social reality (Ibid., 87-88). Thirdly, social constructivism can be perceived as an epistemology or theory of knowledge. When social constructivism as a social theory is applied specifically to the social institution called knowledge, social constructivism moves on to become an epistemology. This means that knowledge will be examined to clarify what it is and how it is constructed through social processes, such as language and culture. Thereby, it is the social processes which are interesting to focus on as they shape the knowledge we have and thus our reality (Ibid., 97-102). Fourth and lastly, at the most extreme end of social constructivism is the ontological position. Here it is claimed that social constructivism is not only about the social construction of theoretical knowledge, but that all parts of reality, including the physical part, are socially constructed (Ibid., 18).

In connection with Wenneberg's model showing different levels of social constructivism, this thesis will apply the first three levels but not the ontological perspective. The critical perspective is applied as previous cases, which may have analysed the effect of communication in social media on Starbucks image, are not perceived as true and applicable to everyone, and because the Starbucks case study may lead to new findings about some individuals' image perceptions. In addition, social constructivism will also be applied as a social theory. This is done in order to explain how specific social phenomena, such as identity and image, are constructed and work in the specific case study as individuals are affected differently through their social interactions and thus construct different perceptions of reality. This will be done by using theories about the social reality, which in this case are the theories about social media, stakeholders, identity and image. Lastly, the epistemological perspective is applied as the knowledge about social processes will be examined to be able to create an understanding of reality. Practically, this means that in order to create and understand the knowledge about the social processes that affect the individuals' images of Starbucks, it is necessary to analyse the individuals' experiences with and actions regarding the Starbucks case study.

7. Methodology

The following section will explain the methodological approach applied in the thesis by accounting for the selection of research design, research methods and data types. This account will also include an explanation of the importance of the specific selections and how these selections affect the structure of the thesis as well as the process of answering the problem statement.

7.1 Research Design

The selection and application of a research design in a project affect both the content and design of the specific project. Depending on the type of research design and the data required to reach a specific objective or conclusion, different types of data can be collected using various research methods which have different implications on the data collection methods as well as usefulness of the collected data (Harboe 2011, 59).

Selection of Research Design

The research design affects the methods used to collect data, and several types of research design exist, such as experiments, case studies, quantitative surveys, and action research (Ibid., 59). In this thesis, the case study design has been applied as research design as the focus is only on a single case which is the Starbucks case and its specific problem statement. A case study focuses on an extensive examination of the circumstances surrounding the specific case and its potential problem. The case study usually focuses on the unique features of the specific case and is often associated with a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis (Bryman 2004, 48-50).

Different types of case studies exist, which are the critical case, the unique or extreme case, the revelatory case (Yin in Bryman 2004, 51), and the exemplifying case (Bryman 2004, 51). The *critical case* has a clearly specified hypothesis, and the purpose is to create a better understanding of the circumstances in which the hypothesis can be confirmed or denied. The *unique* or *extreme case* focuses on a specific case in which the circumstances are perceived to be unlike others thus making the case interesting to examine further. The *revelatory case* concerns cases which have previously been inaccessible for observation and analysis (Yin in Bryman 2004, 51). The *exemplifying case* is chosen when a case is neither extreme nor unusual but useful simply because it is suitable for examining certain research questions, such as related to key social processes (Bryman 2004, 52).

In connection with the thesis, selecting the case study allows for an intensive examination of a single case in contrast to analysing and comparing several different cases. In this connection, a standard criticism of case studies is that they provide results which often are inapplicable for generalisations. However, this claim is often countered with the explanation that case studies are not for generalisation but used for more elaborate examination of a single case (Bryman 2004, 52). Therefore, the single case design, and more specifically the exemplifying case, is appropriate for this thesis as the purpose is not to generalise but to examine and understand the specific circumstances in relation to Starbucks and its customers.

Research Methods and Data Types

In connection with the selection of a research design, two categories of research methods are distinguished between which are quantitative and qualitative research methods (Harboe 2011, 45).

Quantitative research methods aim to collect quantitative data which are countable and statistically calculable. These methods are descriptive and useful when aiming to create a representative overview of a specific problem and are often found via specific research methods, such as questionnaire surveys or experiments. Generally, the amount of respondents in quantitative research methods is much larger compared to qualitative methods as the purpose of quantitative methods is to make generalisations. As the answering options are predetermined it is not possible to have answers and data explained in connection with the reasons for the respondents' individual answers (Ibid., 45-47).

On the other hand, qualitative research methods aim to collect qualitative data which are not used for generalising and showing results that represent a larger part of a population. However, the purpose of using qualitative research methods is to collect data which go into details within a defined field of study to explain the individual circumstances. In contrast to the quantitative approach, the qualitative methods usually focus on a limited amount of respondents to go more into depth and examine a problem in a specific context, such as through interaction and dialogue questions. Qualitative data are often collected through research methods, such as field observations and qualitative interviews of which the latter enables answers to be elaborated and additional non-predefined questions to be asked during the interview in order to increase and improve the amount of collected data (Ibid., 47-48 & 56).

The type of data collected in the thesis is qualitative. First, an analysis of Starbucks' use of communication in social media will be conducted to examine if the company's identity expressed through its mission statements is reflected in the communication. Starbucks' communication will also be analysed in order to identify any possible use of communication strategies towards its customers and how these affect the communication with the customers. Second, qualitative interviews with individual Starbucks customers will be conducted based on the findings in the analysis of Starbucks' use of communication. These interviews will assess the customers' perceptions of Starbucks and how the use of communication in social media influences the customers' images of Starbucks.

The analytical approach to be applied in the two sub-analyses will be accounted for in section 12.1, and the contents and structures of the two sub-analyses will be thoroughly explained in sections 12.2 (sub-analysis of communication) and 12.3 (sub-analysis of interviews).

The application of a qualitative research design and qualitative research methods is consistent with the scientific approach applied in the thesis. The reason for this is that social constructivism considers elements such as interaction, language and communication, and social context to be key elements in shaping individuals' understanding of knowledge and reality. These elements are easier to examine if the focus is on an extensive analysis of a limited field of study, and thus it is useful to apply a qualitative approach to analyse and understand the Starbucks case more extensively.

Furthermore, in connection with research designs, a distinction is made between a deductive approach which focuses on theory testing and an inductive approach which is concerned with theory building. As the scientific approach in the thesis is social constructivism theories are used as a means to explain and understand social interactions that occur between individuals. Therefore, the theories applied in the thesis will function to explain the Starbucks case by testing the selected theories on the case. This implies a move from the general theories to the specific case study, and thus it is the deductive approach which is applied in the thesis (de Vaus 2001, 6-7). The deductive approach entails that the problem statement is the point of departure in the thesis. The theories which will be tested on the empirical data are first accounted for through descriptions of the thesis' use of methodology. Afterwards, the theories are tested on the empirical data in order to reach an answer of the problem statement (Ankersborg 2011, 86-87).

8. Theory Foundation

This section will elaborate on the theories applied in the thesis. The purpose is to explain the relevance and interconnectedness of the selected theories regarding answering the problem statement and to clarify the structure of the applied theories. In the thesis there are different things which are interesting to look further into. First, it is interesting to examine how Starbucks uses communication in social media and how the company strategically uses various social media channels to communicate to and with customers. Secondly, it is also interesting to examine how customers' perceptions of Starbucks are affected by the company's specific use of social media and communication strategies.

Social Media

The first theoretical part to be accounted for is social media theory, which is included to describe the context in which Starbucks communicates to and with its customers. Therefore, this theory primarily functions to describe the foundation of the interaction and communication between Starbucks and its customers. Accounting for social media and some of the most important channels which are available to both users and companies will help clarify the large potential that is present in utilising social

media. Social media also affects companies' communication strategies and activities and enables them to interact with different stakeholder groups, customers in particular, at any time anywhere.

The social media theory described in the thesis is based on social media and corporate communications authors Lon Safko and Joel Postman's works on social media.

Stakeholders

The section about stakeholder theory is relevant to the thesis as it accounts for the different individuals and groups that both influence a company but are also influenced themselves by the company. Furthermore, the notion of image focuses on the perception of a company as a whole and thus includes numerous individuals and groups that have some degree of interest and stake in a company. Thus, it is necessary to examine the various stakeholder groups' importance to and influence on a company as it affects how the company communicates with the specific stakeholder group.

In order to do this, the stakeholder theory described and applied in the thesis is primarily connected to Professor R. Edward Freeman's works on stakeholder theory as he has been one of the most influential writers in this field for several decades. To support Freeman's theory and improve the general understanding of stakeholder theory relevant works primarily by Professor in stakeholder theory Max Clarkson, Professors in business ethics Thomas Donaldson and Lee Preston, and Professor in management and organisation Joep Cornelissen have been included.

Identity and Image

Identity and image theory has been included to examine customers' perceptions of Starbucks and to understand the factors behind the company's efforts in creating a specific internal identity and external image in the minds of the company's stakeholders. Primarily, identity has an internal perspective and focuses on the members of the company whereas image has an external perspective and focuses on outsiders' perceptions of a company. However, the two concepts overlap which may result in some confusion. At the same time, some scholars also use different terminology to describe the same elements (van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 38 & 62-63), and thus it is necessary to explain and clarify these concepts in order to improve the overall understanding of identity and image. The theory section will elaborate on two different approaches to identity and image, organisational and corporate. In addition, the perceptions which companies attempt to construct in the minds of their stakeholders also influence companies' choice of communication strategies.

The identity and image theory applied in the thesis have primarily been based on the works of corporate branding scholars Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz, management and marketing scholars Edward Gray and John Balmer, and reputation scholars Cees van Riel and Charles Fombrun. In support

of their work, and to improve the understanding of the theories of identity and image, works of management experts Stuart Albert and David Whetten, and Professor in management and organisation Joep Cornelissen in particular have also been included.

9. Theory

This section will describe and account for the theories which will be applied in the thesis. First, social media theory will be explained to describe the context in which the Starbucks case occurs. Then, stakeholder theory will be accounted for as the stakeholder group 'customers' is the focal point in this thesis. Lastly, the theories of identity and image, respectively, will be accounted for as these theories form the basis of assessing the Starbucks customers' perceptions of the company, and thereby makes it possible to answer the problem statement.

9.1 Social Media

The following section will account for the concept of social media. First, this will include a clarification of what social media is. Then, some of the most important social media channels will be described as well as how companies may benefit from using these. Finally, the influence of social media on corporate communication will be elaborated to clarify how companies' communication activities and strategies are affected by the use of social media.

Social media theory is included in the thesis as it is necessary to account for the context in which Starbucks and its stakeholders communicate and interact. Social media brings with it many new opportunities and challenges, which both individuals and companies need to be aware of as it greatly affects ways of communicating and interacting.

9.1.1 What is Social Media?

The invention of the Internet revolutionised the way in which people interact, retrieve information, and much more, and have had an immense influence on people's everyday lives. As the Internet has developed over the years, new possibilities and challenges have appeared for both individuals and companies. Especially in recent years, this development has been evident with the emergence of numerous social media channels and tools, which have facilitated new means for close, personal two-way communication and interaction between people regardless of geographical location or time.

The term social media consists of two words, social and media. Social refers to the needs humans have to connect with other humans and be around similar like-minded people with whom they can share thoughts, ideas and experiences comfortably and trustfully. Media refers to the technological means

used to connect and interact with others. Thus, social media is about the use of various media and technologies to reach out and connect with others, build trust, and create relationships (Safko 2012, 4-5).

9.1.2 Types of Social Media

Although communication is and always has been a two-way process, the methods of communication to current and potential customers have changed dramatically over the recent years. The use of digital social media tools has changed the type of communication from one-way reporting towards two-way conversation. The media and technologies used in social media are many, and some of the most popular channels relates to social networks, blogs and forums (Ibid., 10 and 140).

Social networks

Social networks, also known as virtual and online communities, consist of groups of people who interact through online networks, blogs, comments, sharing, checking in, reviews, and who use text, audio, photographs, and video for social, professional, and educational purposes. The purpose of a social network is to build trust in a given community in order for its members to interact and share thoughts, ideas, and information about themselves. A network can be as small as just a few persons or have hundreds of millions of users, which is the case with the world's largest online social networking site Facebook that has more than 800 million members of which half log in every day (Ibid., 25-31).

Facebook is a social networking site which allows its users to digitally connect with anyone anywhere in the world in order to share content and information, view and comment on other users' activity and content-sharing, and basically interact online with other users. It is possible to connect with friends and family, make new friends, and talk about life with others by sharing information and content. In addition to connecting and interacting with friends or strangers, users are also able to interact with companies which have created company pages that users are able to 'like' in order to show interest in the company, its Facebook page, and its business activities in general (Ibid., 30-33).

For companies, being on Facebook is an opportunity to be exposed to more than 800 million users worldwide. This means great opportunities for marketing products and services to many current and potential customers. In addition, the companies are able to create company pages which any user can become connected to, and afterwards receive information from and about the companies and their activities from both the companies themselves but also other users (Ibid., 2012, 30-33).

Social networking sites have completely and rapidly changed the way that people interact both personally and professionally, and with the amount of potential customers gathered in one place, such as Facebook, it is most likely a very good idea for companies to be present there as well. Furthermore,

in relation to decision-making when buying products or services many people seek advice from their trusted network of friends, family, colleagues and even strangers of which many are present on online and on Facebook (Ibid., 27-28).

Blogs

A blog, or web log, is a website which functions like an online journal, and is one of the easiest and most effective ways to create conversations. It is primarily maintained by an individual, who makes regular entries or posts displayed in reverse chronological order and includes commentary, thoughts, and ideas. Most blogs focus on a single or very few specific subjects, which contain text, photos and videos, and a blogs is a useful tool for expressing one's thoughts, ideas and activities. One of the most important features of a blog is the reader's ability to interact with the author through comments, and asking open-ended questions in blog posts is one of the best ways to encourage dialogue and interaction. However, the author is also required to maintain the blog as regularly posts are necessary in order not to lose the interest of blog readers (Ibid.,141-149 & 159).

Blogs are not only for individuals to use but also for companies. So-called corporate blogs can be used for internal purposes, such as communicating to employees, or as an external communication tool, used for sales, marketing and branding purposes, aimed at communicating to and with customers and other stakeholders (Ibid., 148-149). Blogs can help companies create trusted followers and brand themselves in a strong environment right in front of its target audiences (Ibid., 551-552).

Forums

Internet forums are website applications that manage and provide media in which ongoing online community discussions about a particular subject can take place. The users are a group of contributors along with moderators who participate in the discussion. The moderators monitor the discussions to ensure that they adhere to the forum's rules. Members can start topics which other members can comment on to participate in the discussion (Ibid., 119).

The Internet forum was one of the first Internet-based networking and online communication tools and is still seen as a great way to engage people in an interactive ongoing conversation on a particular subject regardless of it being to share ideas, seek advice, or simply to participate in discussions (Ibid., 117-118).

Forums facilitate building strong community ties, loyalty and trust and are intended to promote ongoing dialogue about a specific subject. A forum is a good example of a trusted network, which is why many companies have established their own online company forums to allow people from all over the world to participate in discussions about the companies, their products and services. Most

members of a forum join since they have interest in the subject matter and actively participate by reading, commenting, and sharing ideas. Forums focus on trust-building, participation, two-way communication and user-generated content (Ibid., 118).

9.1.3 Companies' Use of Social Media

For companies there are many reasons to actively use social media and interact with customers and other stakeholders. Social media is primarily used to communicate with customers and offers a set of highly effective tools for providing customer service and creating positive word of mouth. Meanwhile, social media is also effective for internal communications to and with employees (Ibid., 8-9). The large amount of users who are online in social media brings along enormous amounts of valuable information about habits, preferences, and perceptions of products and brands which companies may use in their communication to and with customers and others stakeholders. Social media is also an opportunity for genuine one-to-one conversations and thus makes the company able to get closer to its customers and benefit from the vast amounts of information that users share (Postman 2009, 3-4).

With social media the way people communicate has changed, and companies' traditional use of one-way communication has changed towards involving the customers through two-way communication. However, an outcome of this for companies is an increasing loss of control over corporate messages as many customers perceive the messages as untrustworthy and because people increasingly are communicating and discussing with others online about the companies which affect their opinions. Instead, customers prefer receiving information from and sharing experiences and thoughts with people they know, have a relationship with, and share a bond with through trust (Safko 2012, 5-6). This means that customers are gaining more influence on and control of companies' brands and corporate messages through their use of social media and online interaction with peers (Ibid., 535). Therefore, companies should engage in social media as it has much influence on their reputations and brands through the conversations that take place online about the companies, their products, and brands. It is necessary for companies to be aware of these conversations, participate in them, and actively work with encouraging good behaviour to receive positive publicity while preventing negative (Ibid., 580).

Specific types of social media, such as online communities and forums, enable companies to collaborate with stakeholders regarding business activities, such as product and service innovation, communications improvement, and customer service. Social media also facilitates better engagement between a company and its audiences as social media allows everyone associated with the company to be an active part of the company's online activities and company strategy (Postman 2009, 4). Social media is also a means for the company to provide its audiences with richer user experiences as they

can incorporate different media and technologies, such as video and live streaming, in the interaction with stakeholders (Ibid., 4).

However, with social media and new technologies, potential dangers also lurks. The large amounts of people who are now able to interact with companies' through social media affect the companies' messages and content through participation in conversations with and about the companies. This reduces companies' ability to control everything that is being communicated and thus can influence them negatively (Safko 2012, 5). Furthermore, as users are able to interact with companies online anytime from anywhere, may increasingly create unrealistic expectations of companies regarding improved customer service, faster response time, and increasing availability to respond to users' questions and comments. Companies may also underestimate the amount of resources that are required to make their social media experience successful (Postman 2009, 11).

Essentially social media marketing is all about listening first, understanding the conversation, and speaking last (Safko 2012, 6). Doing this may lead to the building of more lasting and trusted relationships, which will result in more sales, fewer returns, and greater word of mouth (Ibid., 6). At the same time, this may prevent customers airing negative experiences and thereby creating negative word of mouth, which quickly can reach vast amounts of users online.

9.1.4 Social Media's Influence on Corporate Communication

Social media affects companies and can become a powerful tool for companies in their work with corporate communication. Social media influences companies' communication activities and results in increased authenticity, transparency, immediacy, connectedness and participation.

Never before, have companies' communication activities experienced so much *authenticity* as now due to the amount of unfiltered, spontaneous information coming from companies through numerous social media tools (Postman 2009, 9).

Stakeholders' need for increased *transparency* of companies' business activities is easier satisfied through social media as companies are able to share valuable information publicly to anyone at any time. By being open and increasingly transparent, companies may be exposing many aspects of their businesses to their stakeholders, such as considerations about strategic decisions. However, if successful, the companies may experience closer and more rewarding relationships with its stakeholders (Ibid., 9-10). With social media, communication also becomes more *immediate* as it is happening at lightning speed. Companies are able to express themselves instantly which make the communication more current and relevant for their audiences. However, this immediacy also happens outside of companies' control in blogs, communities, and social networks in which anyone can write

positive or negative statements about the companies. Related to this immediacy is also *connectedness* as messages are more widely distributed through social media and other technologies which make recipients more connected despite being more geographically dispersed (Ibid., 10-12).

Social media is increasing external audiences' *participation* in companies' corporate communication activities. On companies' blogs, forums or social media newsrooms, users are able to comment, ask questions and, more importantly, help other users. Thereby, many customers are assisting companies by solving problems for other customers, and many customer forums are almost self-running with the companies being only supervisors maintaining good behaviour. The increased participation provides companies with new input and ideas, and allows users to feel involved and valued, which improve the perception of the companies and their brands (Ibid., 11).

Companies' presence in social media affects both them and their stakeholders significantly. With the right focus and strategy, many possibilities are available to the companies which can result in competitive advantages and company growth if applied in a successful way.

9.2 Stakeholders

The following section will elaborate on stakeholder theory. First, the term stakeholder will be defined and described including the view and necessity of dividing stakeholders into different groups. Then, the importance of active stakeholder management and collaboration as well as possible stakeholder communication strategies will be accounted for.

Stakeholder theory is included in the thesis as it helps to identify and prioritise the many different individuals and groups that companies must consider in connection with their business activities. Every stakeholder group has a different degree of importance to a company and also influences the company in different ways, and, therefore, it is necessary for any company to manage the relationships with all stakeholders. Companies should ensure that stakeholders are heard and communicated with to meet the expectations and interests of all stakeholder groups in order to not to lose their trust and confidence.

9.2.1 The Stakeholder Concept

In today's business world, companies are increasingly under pressure from many different groups of people who have different agendas and interests. Companies experience this pressure both internally from their own employees and externally from customers, investors, interest groups, and many others, who expect companies to provide results, information, etc. faster and more efficiently. It is necessary for companies to identify and consider each of these stakeholders in order for companies to improve

the management of and relationships with these stakeholders as well as the management of the companies (Freeman 2010, 4-8).

The stakeholder concept comprises many definitions which are different in scope and regarding the view of who a company's stakeholders are. However, a classic definition of stakeholders is by Edward Freeman who stated that *"a stakeholder is any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's purpose and objectives"* (Freeman 1984, 6)*. Freeman believes that any company has a direction it wishes to head for through its overall strategy. Individuals or groups that can affect the company's direction and strategy are perceived as stakeholders. Therefore, these stakeholders play a vital role in the success of the company and must be considered by the company in its strategic process of managing the company (Freeman 2010, 25 & 46).

Max Clarkson (1995, 106) defines stakeholders as *"persons or groups that have, or claim, ownership, rights, or interests in a corporation and its activities, past, present, or future".* These claims or rights are the result of transactions with, or actions taken by, the company, which may be legal or moral, individual or collective. Stakeholders with similar interests, claims, or rights may be categorised as belonging to the same group of stakeholders.

The term stakeholder includes the word stake which can be defined as *"an interest or a share in an undertaking, [that] can range from simply an interest in an undertaking at one extreme to a legal claim of ownership at the other extreme"* (Carroll and Bucholtz 2011, 65). The content of stakes held by stakeholders is different based on the stakeholders' specific interests in the company and may conflict with each other which forces the company to consider the balance between various stakeholders and their interests in the company (Cornelissen 2011, 42).

Freeman considered three types of stakes to be present: equity stakes, economic or market stakes, and influencer stakes. Equity stakes belongs to those who have some direct ownership of the company such as shareholders. Economic or market stakes belongs to those who have an economic interest, but not an ownership interest, in the company, such as employees and customers. Influencer stakes belongs to those who have neither an ownership nor economic interest in the company or its actions, but have other interests, such as environmental groups or trade organisations (Freeman 1984, 8).

9.2.2 Stakeholder Importance and Division
A standard way to look at stakes and stakeholders is to assess whether a stakeholder's interest in a company is primarily economic or moral in nature, and on this basis the stakeholders are divided into groups of primary and secondary stakeholders (Cornelissen 2011, 43). However, it is of course possible for stakeholders to have both economic and moral interests in a company, which complicates

the assessment of the stakeholder groups' importance to a company. According to Clarkson (1995, 105-108), primary stakeholder groups are those which are important for financial transactions and essential for the company to survive. Secondary stakeholder groups generally influence or affect, or are influenced or affected by, the company, but are not engaged in financial transactions and are thus not directly necessary for the company to survive. However, secondary stakeholder groups have moral or normative interests in the company and are able to influence public opinion in favour of or against the company's performance. Therefore, secondary stakeholders are also important regardless of their lack of direct financial influence on the company.

In line with Clarkson's view on stakeholders, Figure 3 shows Freeman et al.'s (2007, 51) perception of the division of stakeholders and their relative importance to a company which is much alike Clarkson's approach. They believe primary stakeholders are those individuals or groups that engage in direct economic transactions with the company while secondary stakeholders do not engage with the company in direct economic exchanges, but are either affected by the company's actions or able to affect the company themselves (Ibid., 50-51).
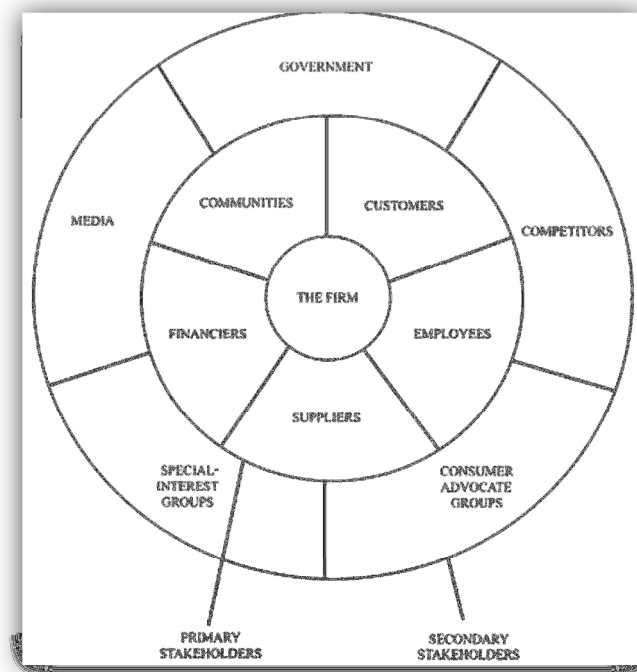

Figure 3: Two-tier stakeholder map of primary and secondary stakeholders (Freeman et al. 2007, 51).

Based on Freeman et al. and Clarkson's perceptions of stakeholders and their importance, all stakeholder groups should be acknowledged and respected as each has some influence on the company either directly or indirectly. In this respect, communication to and with each stakeholder

group is essential in maintaining and developing stakeholder relationships. However, some stakeholder groups are perceived as more important than others namely those that directly engage financially with a company, and thus the primary focus should be on the primary stakeholders.

9.2.3 Stakeholder Management

Organisations increasingly are recognising the need of a view of stakeholder management that involves actively communicating with all stakeholder groups which a company is dependent on and not only with shareholders or customers (Cornelissen 2011, 10). It is important for companies to identify and know about each of its stakeholder groups as it will facilitate more efficient management of companies, such as by improving strategic planning or communication with and information to internal and external stakeholders (Freeman 2010, 35).

Figure 4: Stakeholder model of strategic management (Donaldson and Preston 1995, 69).

Figure 4 shows that stakeholder management is a dynamic process in which the company and its stakeholders are interdependent. This means that the various stakeholder groups are affected by the company's operations but are also able to affect the company and its performance. In addition, the stakeholders are actively participating in changing the image, identity and brand of the company through the ongoing dialogue and interaction between the company and its stakeholders. All stakeholder groups need to be considered and communicated with as each has some degree of influence on the company as well as on other stakeholder groups. By considering the interaction and communication with stakeholders and their potential influence, the company is more likely to sustain its financial performance and secure continued acceptance for its business operations (Donaldson and Preston 1995, 68-69).

Companies do not only interact with stakeholders for instrumental reasons which are related to corporate performance, such as profitability, growth, reduced costs and risks, or an improved reputation. Companies may also embrace normative reasons which are related to morality, ethics and social rights (Ibid., 71). Considering both instrumental and normative reasons may create effects of synergy for companies. By doing well for one stakeholder group for normative reasons may create reputational returns which consequently affect other stakeholder groups' perceptions of a company, and thus create instrumental value for the company (Cornelissen 2011, 42).

In the management of stakeholders there are many considerations to make in order to avoid problems for both stakeholders and the company. All stakeholder groups need to be considered and managed to a different degree. This requires much effort by any company in the process of evaluating the importance of the different stakeholder groups and their influence on the company. The influence of each stakeholder group may change over time which requires companies to regularly assess the importance and influence of each stakeholder group and adapt the companies' use of resources spent on them (Freeman 2010, 52-53). Each stakeholder group also has different kinds of stakes involved in their relations with companies as well as different understandings of how important they are to the companies. The stakeholders' interests in a company might range from a clear focus on instrumental reasons of economic value to normative reasons related to social rights (Ibid., 59). At the same time, some stakeholders may belong to more than one stakeholder group and these differing perceptions and overlaps between stakeholder groups may create complications for both stakeholders and companies in their interaction (Cornelissen 2007, 61).

9.2.4 Communication Strategies

Stakeholders have different interests in a company and focus on different aspects of it. Therefore, it is necessary that each stakeholder group receives information from the company which is relevant and of interest to them in order to maximise the usefulness of the information. Providing qualitative and relevant information to the stakeholders is also very important as it influences the company's image and reputation (Ibid., 44). Stakeholders who are salient or have a powerful interest in the company must be communicated with to ensure their continued support in the company. It is necessary to listen to the company's key stakeholders, such as customers, and maybe also to involve them in some of the decision-making in the company. The involvement of the stakeholders may occur at various levels through three different stakeholder communication strategies. Figure 5 shows different communication strategies and their respective level of stakeholder involvement. The company may apply a strategy in which it only provides or disseminates information to stakeholders to create

awareness or it may apply a strategy of active communication with stakeholders and include them in some of the company's decision-making (Ibid., 49).
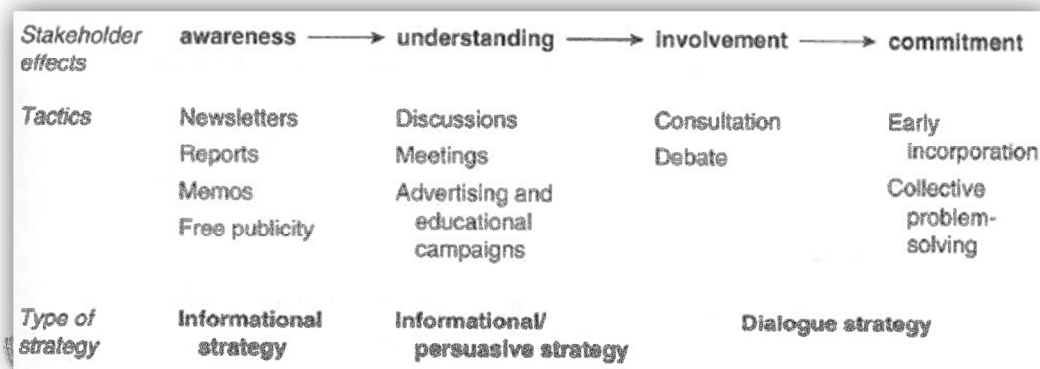

Figure 5: Stakeholder communication: from awareness to commitment (Cornelissen 2011, 49)[1].

As seen in Figure 5, the three types of strategies which can be applied are an informational, persuasive or dialogue strategy.

An *informational strategy* is used to inform stakeholders and make information available, such as through press releases, newsletters and the company website. This strategy may create awareness of corporate decisions and may contribute to the understanding of the reasons for these decisions. A *persuasive strategy* is applied to change and turn the knowledge, attitude, and behaviour of stakeholders in a way that is favourable to the company. Favourable images of the company and a particular understanding of the company's decisions, values, products and services are created through means such as corporate advertising and campaigns. A *dialogue strategy* involves both the company and its stakeholders to engage in a mutual exchange of ideas and opinions through dialogue. This strategy involves active consultation with stakeholders and incorporation of important stakeholders into the company's decision-making. It involves a process of understanding and mutual decisions rather than strategic self-interest on the part of the company (Ibid., 49-50).

The application of the strategies depends among other things on the power-interest of a stakeholder group, and also the need for active engagement with stakeholders in order to build long-term, profitable relationships with them (Ibid., 50).

---

[1] Cornelissen's model is based on the works of Grunig, J.E. and Hunt, T. 1984. *Managing Public Relations.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston; Deetz, S. 2006. "Dialogue, communication theory, and the hope of making quality decisions together: a commentary", *Management Communication Quarterly,* vol. 19: 368-375; Morsing, M. and Schultz, M. 2006. "Corporate social responsibility communication: stakeholder information, response and involvement strategies", *Business Ethics: A European Review* vol. 15: 323-338.
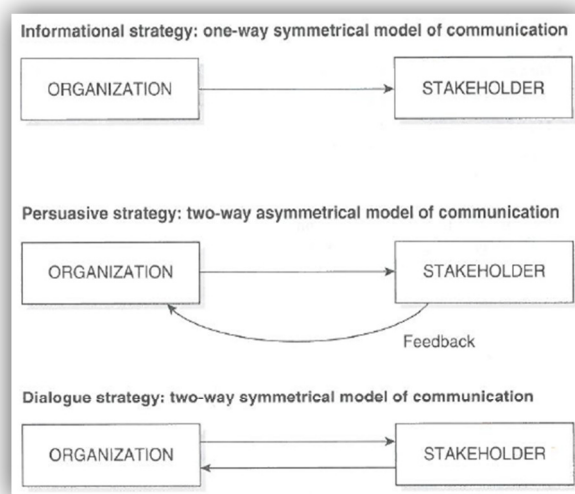
Figure 6: Models of organisation-stakeholder communication (Cornelissen 2011, 50)[2].

Figure 6 shows how the three stakeholder-communication strategies utilises communication to and with its stakeholders, and the type of relationship between the company and its stakeholders.

The informational strategy is *one-way symmetrical,* which means that communication is always one-way and expressed by the company to its stakeholders. The relationship between the company and the stakeholders is symmetrical as the purpose is to communicate objective information about the company to relevant stakeholders and not try to persuade the stakeholders regarding understanding, attitudes or behaviour. The persuasive strategy is *two-way asymmetrical*. This entails that the effects of the company's communication are unbalanced in the company's favour as the purpose is to change stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours while the company remains unaffected. In this sense the company's efforts to communicate with and influence stakeholders aim at creating some kind of reaction from the stakeholders. The dialogue strategy is *two-way symmetrical* with the purpose of exchanging views and opinions to reach mutual understanding between the company and its stakeholders. The communication process allows both parties to express themselves and exchange information freely, and both parties recognise each other as an important part of the process (Ibid., 50-51).

Each of the three strategies requires different media or channels to communicate with the stakeholders and vary significantly based on the media or channels' ability to facilitate rich exchanges. A rich exchange means that the media or channel includes the ability to provide immediate feedback between company and stakeholders, to personalise and adapt messages based on responses, and to

---

[2] Cornelissen's model is based on the works of the authors cited in footnote 1 on the previous page.

express and articulate the message in different ways. These rich exchanges are clearly very important when applying the dialogue strategy as direct, personalised interaction with the stakeholders is necessary. However, less rich exchanges, such as one-way communication products, are associated with an informational strategy as there is no need for stakeholders' direct responses to a message but are effective for well-understood messages and standard data (Ibid., 52-53)[3].

9.2.5 From Stakeholder Management towards Stakeholder Collaboration

Recently, the focus on stakeholders has changed towards an increasing recognition of creating long-term relationships. Rather than focusing on simple, limited communication or exchange of products and services, companies should focus more on changing the relationships between the company and its stakeholders from management to collaboration and from exchanges to long-term relationships (Ibid., 53).

An increased emphasis on stakeholder relationships requires that companies identify the stakeholders who are interested in collaborating and then encourages the process of cooperation. Companies may also adapt some of their business activities so that they conform to expectations of external stakeholders. Moving from management of stakeholders to increased collaboration with them implies applying the two-way symmetrical communication model to build relationships through dialogue, and thereby create opportunities and competitive advantage for the companies. At the same time, this should create added value for the stakeholders involved as they will gain more influence in the decision-making process. An example of this collaboration is to involve customers in the research and development process through participation in brand communities (Ibid., 53-54)[4]. Therefore, involving customers and other important stakeholders may create positive outcomes for both companies and their stakeholders. The mutual gains that are hopefully achieved through the collaboration may lead to closer and more beneficial relationships in a long-term perspective.

9.3 Identity

In the following section the theory of identity will be accounted for. First, this account will elaborate on different perceptions and definitions of the identity theory, which relates to an internal perspective and understanding of the company by the members inside the company. Two approaches to identity,

---

[3] Based on Daft, R. L. and Lengel, R. H. 1986. "Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design", *Management Science* vol. 32 (5): 554-571; and Kaplan, R. S. and Norton, D. P. 2001. *The Strategy-focused Organization: How Balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment.* Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

[4] Based on Svendsen, A. 1998. *The Stakeholder Strategy: Profiting from Collaborative Business Relationships.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers; Andriof, J., Waddock, S. Husted, B. and Rahman, S. S. 2002. *Unfolding Stakeholder Thinking: Theory, Responsibility and Engagement.* Sheffield: Greenleaf.

organisational and corporate, have different understandings of how a company's identity is constructed and affected by those inside the company. Then, a comparison of the two approaches to identity will be conducted to account for the interdependence between the approaches and clarify the importance of connecting the two approaches in order to create a more comprehensive understanding of identity.

The theory about identity is included in the thesis in order to clarify what a company's identity is and how it is constructed by companies. The identity of a company also has an influence on its stakeholders' different images of the company and the ways in which companies communicate with various stakeholder groups.

To understand the image theory better it is necessary first to look at the influence of a company's identity on its image as the identity in part shapes the image individuals have of a company (van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 69). In addition, a company's identity, preferably a unique one, may create differentiation from other companies, and may lead to projecting a coherent and consistent set of images to the public, which can result in a competitive advantage to the company (Fombrun 1996, 6). Therefore, it is necessary first to look at what identity is, and then how it affects the construction of a company's image.

The concept of identity is multidisciplinary and has been defined in many ways based on the many different approaches to identity from fields such as organisational studies, marketing and strategy. The many approaches to identity create both confusion, but also different viewpoints and perceptions, which add value to the understanding and application of the identity concept. In this connection it is possible to view identity as divided into two parts, organisational and corporate, which both address the same phenomenon but from different perspectives (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 11-12).

9.3.1 Organisational Identity
Organisational identity is rooted in social identity theory which emphasises social interaction as the means to create individual identity (Albert and Whetten in Hatch and Schultz 2000, 15). Focus is on the internal understanding by all members of the organisation and their perception of the organisation's identity (Brønn in Brønn and Wiig 2002, 104). Organisational identity refers to what members perceive, feel and think about their organisation and is seen as a collective and commonly-shared understanding of the distinctive values and characteristics of the organisation. It is grounded in local meanings and embedded in the organisational culture (Hatch and Schultz 1997, 357), and through interpersonal communication, which is the dominant way of communicating; identity is

created in the interactions between the members of the organisation (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 17).

An early definition of organisational identity which have been reused much in the field of organisational identity theory (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 15) is by Albert and Whetten (in van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 66) who stated that *"Organizational Identity is (a) what is taken by organizational members to be central to the organization, (b) what makes the organization distinctive from other organizations in the eyes of the beholding members, and (c) what is perceived by members to be enduring or continuing linking the present with the past and presumable the future".* According to Albert and Whetten (in van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 63), companies, just as individuals, have their own individuality and uniqueness which are rooted in different factors such as its strategy and philosophy. For each company this specific combination of identity factors creates a set of values that are core, distinctive and enduring to the company.

Hatch and Schultz (in Schultz et al. 2000, 15) describe organisational identity as the many different elements that all of an organisation's members have an opinion about and how they think of themselves. According to them, organisational identity refers to how members of an organisation understand who they are, and what they and their organisation stand for (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 15). The identity of a company is experienced through everyday behaviour and language, and communication of organisational identity to external stakeholders requires interpersonal interaction between stakeholders and members of the company (Ibid., 19).

9.3.2 Corporate Identity

Corporate identity has its roots in consultancy practices and marketing (Ibid., 12), which are perspectives that mainly have an external focus for companies, such as communication with and to customers.

Corporate identity refers to how a company expresses and differentiates itself to its stakeholders (van Riel and Balmer 1997, 350), and it involves constructing a specific impression of a company to differentiate the company's position in the eyes of important stakeholder groups (Cornelissen 2011, 62-63). It can be seen as the idea of the organisation, and how it is represented primarily to external stakeholders. The corporate identity is primarily defined by the top management and most often communicated to the company's stakeholders through mass media (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 17-19).

The view on corporate identity as aimed primarily towards external stakeholders is also evident in Gray and Balmer's (1998, 695-697) definition of corporate identity which they defined as *"the reality*

and uniqueness of an organization, which is integrally related to its external and internal image and reputation through corporate communication". According to them, corporate identity essentially states what the corporation is. It refers to the distinct characteristics of the company used to differentiate it from competitors in the eyes of its stakeholders through corporate communication in an effort to affect the company's corporate image and reputation, and thus hopefully create a competitive advantage (Ibid., 695-696). Figure 7 depicts this process.
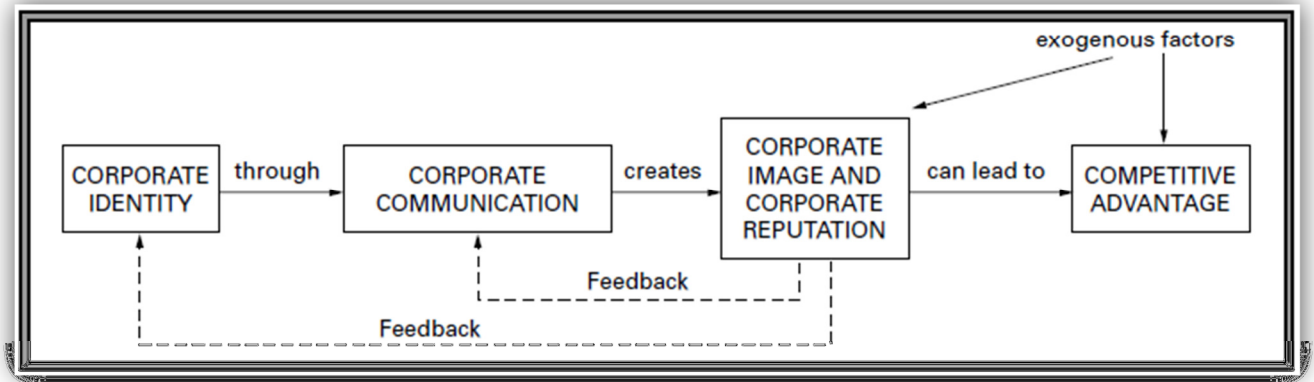

Figure 7: Operational model for managing corporate reputation and image (Gray and Balmer 1998, 696).

The aim of corporate identity management is to establish a favourable reputation with the company's stakeholders in order to sell additional products and services, attract new employees or retain current ones, or to invest in the company (van Riel 1995, 29). Furthermore, as many products and services are becoming increasingly similar, a distinct corporate identity increases a company's likelihood of being profitable (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 13) while also generating identification to its stakeholders (van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 62). An often used economic argument is also that a distinctive and recognised corporate identity can generate added value through improved corporate images and brands (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 13).

Therefore, a favourable corporate identity which positively affects the company's corporate reputation has strategic value for the company and may lead to competitive advantages while ensuring acceptance and legitimacy from its stakeholders. The corporate identity can be seen as an intangible and valuable asset to the company, which also makes it difficult to imitate by other companies (Cornelissen 2011, 62-64). Much work concerned with creating this distinctiveness to external stakeholders through communication and impression management should be bound in a company's own distinctive identity (van Riel and Balmer 1997, 348).

An approach within the corporate identity perspective is the strategic school, which focuses on the central idea of the organisation and is often stated in the vision, mission and philosophy of a company. Corporate identity is perceived as part of the strategic process of connecting corporate strategy to a company's image and reputation (van Riel 1995, 34-35) and influences how a company communicates about itself due to the strong link to the company vision and strategy (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 14). According to Hatch and Schultz (Ibid., 17) the creation of a corporate identity by a company's decision-makers is also increasingly including both internal and external stakeholders' perceptions and reactions in the identity formulation.

Identity issues, such as who we are and our way of behaving and communicating, all influence how external audiences perceive members of a company. Communicating these aspects of a company's identity to external stakeholders may help the company project a specific identity which will make the external stakeholders create an image of the company that is similar to the company's own desired image (Ibid., 18-23).

9.3.3 Connecting Organisational and Corporate Identity

Table 1 summarises some of the main differences between organisational and corporate identity. The main differences are seen in the way identity is created and communicated, and by who, as well as who the recipients of the communication are.

Dimensions of identity	Corporate identity	Organisational identity
Perspective	Managerial: top managers and their advisers	Organisational: all members of the organisation
Recipients	External stakeholders or audiences	Organisation members or internal stakeholders
Communication channels	Mediated	Interpersonal

Table 1: Contrasts between corporate and organisational identity (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 17).

Connecting corporate identity, the picture of the company which is presented to external stakeholders, to the core values of the company, which members of the company themselves associate with the company, is important. Because a corporate identity which is rooted in the organisational identity ensures that the projected image is real and authentic rather than fake and cosmetic, and at the same time is carried and shared by members of the company. Furthermore, the image projected to external stakeholders affects the beliefs and values of employees and thus affects the organisational identity as employees mirror themselves in the messages communicated by the company to external stakeholders. Therefore, the two types of identity in a company, organisational and corporate, should

not be perceived as separate but rather as elements which should be aligned to improve the effect on internal and external stakeholders (Dutton and Dukerich 1991, 542-551).

This perception of identity is also shared by Hatch and Schultz' who view identity as comprised of both organisational and corporate identity and thereby enhances the perception of identity as a multidisciplinary concept. They state that *"Identity is formed both from internal and external positions. Who we are cannot be completely separated from the perceptions others have of us and that we have of others. Multiple images of identity refer to the same organization. Identity is a text that is read in relation to cultural context. Tacit understandings sit alongside overt expressions of identity [and] identity involves the instrumental use of emergent cultural symbols"* (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 27).

The identity of a company also influences the way in which the company communicates about itself. Due to increasing amounts of messages, communication channels, and media awareness, it is necessary to create consistency between all forms of corporate communication. This consistency creates a reliable, recognisable, and distinctive image of the company across its communication channels and messages (Gray and Balmer 1998, 695-697). Since internal and external stakeholder groups sometimes overlap, for example employees who are shareholders or living in close proximity to their workplace, it is also important to focus on aligning both organisational and corporate identity. This is necessary to prevent a mismatch between different stakeholders' experiences of what the company communicates about its identity and the stakeholders' direct experiences with the organisational identity. Any misalignments may create negative impressions of a company by its stakeholders (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 18). In addition, a company will never be perceived as authentic if its employees do not believe and express the company's shared values in their daily interactions with customers and other stakeholders (van Riel and Fombrun 2007, 62).

9.4 Image

As stated in the theory foundation, the focus of image primarily is on a company's external stakeholders, in contrast to identity, which primarily is related to an internal understanding of the company by members inside a company. Based on the identity theory presented in section 9.3, which clarified identity's connection to and influence on image, this section will account for the image theory applied in the thesis. First, two different approaches to image and relevant definitions will be accounted for. These two approaches, organisational and corporate image, have different views on image, but the focus is external and aimed at the perceptions by those outside a company. Then, the importance of a positive image in the minds of a company's stakeholders and potential outcomes will

be elaborated. Finally, the alignment of various aspects of a company in the process of creating a consistent image will be accounted for.

Companies are facing challenges as they are dealing with different expectations and demands from their stakeholders. To overcome these challenges companies may project particular positive images of themselves in order to build, maintain and protect their reputations with its stakeholders. This may in turn lead to stakeholders' acceptance of the companies' business operations and a view of the companies as legitimate (Cornelissen 2011, 59).

9.4.1 Organisational Image
Dutton and Dukerich (1991, 547-548) state that organisational image focuses on what those inside a company assess those outside the company to think about the company and defines organisational image as *"organization members' perceptions of how outsiders perceive the organization"*. They believe that organisational image describes attributes which members of a company believe people outside the company use to distinguish it from other companies. The organisational image is important to members of a company as it represents their best perceptions of the characteristics they believe others outside the company are likely to have of them.

The more members of a company feel affiliated with their company, the more they will be motivated to protect a positive organisational image or repair a damaged one through their actions. Their actions are also directed in ways that actively try to manage impressions of the company by those outside the company (Ibid., 549-550). Hatch and Schultz (1997, 358) state that organisational identity is increasingly influenced by, and has an influence on, organisational image, and thereby acts as a two-way process. This means that members of a company have their perceptions and understandings of what they and their company stands for influenced by how they believe those outside the company think of them.

9.4.2 Corporate Image
Corporate image is related to external perceptions of a company by its stakeholders (Ibid., 359). According to van Riel and Fombrun (2007, 26) *"a corporate image is like a mirror: it reflects the identity of the organization"* and having a favourable or unfavourable image is partly based on the way a company communicates about itself. The corporate image is used to describe the features of a company that create specific perceptions in the minds of stakeholders. The company's signals, such as the behaviour of employees or external communication, are interpreted by the stakeholders based on the company's actions and self-expressions and thus influence the company's image (Ibid., 39-40). However, this mirror of the company's identity is not always in line with the actual identity as the

company attempts to influence stakeholders' images of the company through advertising and other forms of self-representation (Fombrun 1996, 37).

Gray and Balmer (1998, 697-699) defined corporate image as *"the immediate mental picture that audiences have of an organization".* This immediate picture or image is an individual's overall perception of a company at a single point in time. The perception is based on the individual's beliefs, ideas, feelings and impressions about the company, and the messages the individual is faced with from and about the company (Cornelissen 2007, 132). According to Gray and Balmer (1998, 696), the role of corporate image is to create a specific image in the minds of the company's key stakeholders particularly in relation to the company's line of business and products.

9.4.3 Stakeholders and Corporate Image Management

The increasing blurring of boundaries between companies and their stakeholders in today's business world has created a need to strategically manage corporate images (Ibid., 695). This blurring is evident in cases where internal stakeholders such as employees also act as external stakeholders through their roles as shareholders or customers. At the same time, some external stakeholder groups, such as investors or interest groups, may increasingly affect decision-making in companies. Therefore, corporate image management is an important part of corporate communication, and an important process by which a company communicates with its stakeholders. The focus is on constructing an image of the company through communication to influence stakeholders' perceptions of the company. In this connection, corporate communication is not only seen as a way to exchange information but also a means to construct and project a specific image of the company. There are many strategic advantages for companies in actively working with and developing their corporate images (Cornelissen 2011, 60):

Distinctiveness and unity

A consistently communicated corporate image creates distinctiveness in relation to other companies, and may result in a clearer understanding by stakeholders of the company and its values. Stakeholders may also prefer the company over others which positively impact the company's performance. The benefits are not only experienced externally as a clear, strong corporate image may lead to improved motivation and morale among employees and create a sense of community and identification with the company (Ibid., 60-61).

Consistency and risk reduction

A company has many stakeholder groups which have different interests in the company and thus focus on different aspects of it. The stakeholders also interact with the company in various ways and thus

have different relations with the company. The many perceptions deriving from these interactions with the company may create many different images as each stakeholder perceives and judges the company in various ways (Fombrun 1996, 139). Projecting a consistent image to these different stakeholder groups may prevent the dangers arising from contradicting messages and images. Furthermore, if a company only focuses on a single stakeholder group, and ignores the effects of its activities with others stakeholders, it is likely to experience that the stakeholder groups influence each other and their respective images of the company (Gray and Balmer 1998, 698-699). A failure to create consistent images often derives from not coordinating internal and external communication as they affect both employees and external stakeholders (Cornelissen 2011, 61). Because of this it is also important for the company to project a consistent identity through interaction and communication as it influences the company's image (Gray and Balmer 1998, 699).

Differentiation and positioning

Emphasising a company's uniqueness and distinctiveness helps it to differentiate from its competitors and create a preferred position in the minds of customers and other stakeholders. Similarity between companies in the same industry is also appreciated by stakeholders as it may match their expectations regarding appropriate corporate behaviour in the specific industry and thus makes the company seem legitimate. This means that companies to some degree should have the same generic values as other companies in the industry in order to meet expectations of its stakeholders, but, at the same time, also have some distinctive values that differentiate the company from its competitors in the eyes of the stakeholders (Cornelissen 2011, 66).

9.4.4 Aligning Identity and Image

It is strategically important for companies to achieve alignment between their internal identity and external image to ensure that stakeholders create the right perceptions of the companies. According to Hatch and Schultz (2001, 130-132), it is necessary for companies to align three elements which are the organisational culture experienced by employees, the corporate vision expressed by senior managers, and the corporate images of external stakeholders. To achieve this alignment the internal identity of the company should positively reflect the expectations of key stakeholders, and the beliefs of the stakeholders about the company should accurately reflect the internal identity (Fombrun and Rindova in Schultz et al. 2000, 94-95). In case of any misalignments the result is likely to be negative, such as customer dissatisfaction.

Hatch and Schultz' approach is in line with Gray and Balmer (Figure 7) as a company's identity, experienced through its vision and mission statements as well as the organisational culture, affects the stakeholders' images of the company. These identity elements should be as closely aligned as possible

with the image of the company in order to create consistency and coherency, and thus have the best impact on a company's stakeholders.

The three elements emphasised by Hatch and Schultz are important to companies to ensure that the identity or image projected to stakeholders is carried by senior managers (vision) and employees (culture) while also being understood and appreciated by stakeholders (image) (Cornelissen 2011, 71). Figure 8 shows the three elements that must be aligned.
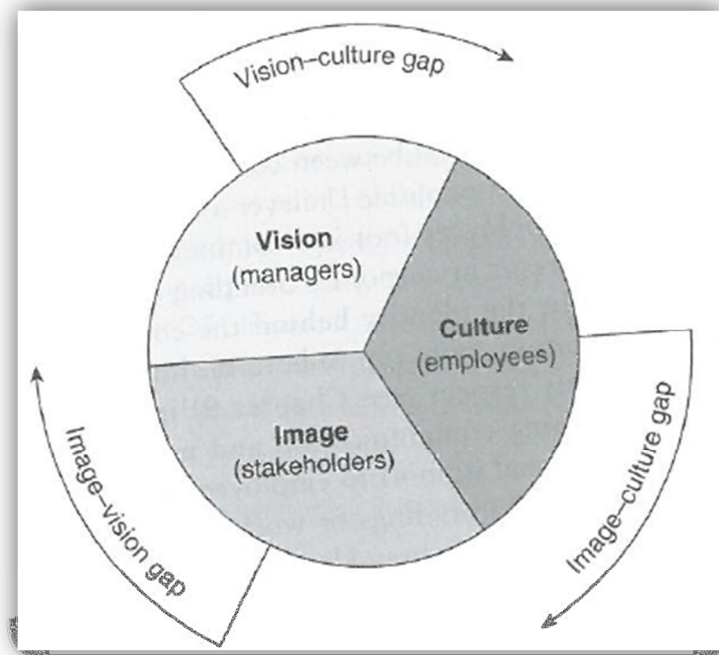
Figure 8: Tool to assess the alignment between vision, culture and image (based on Hatch and Schultz 2001,131).

A *vision-culture gap* may exist if the senior management wants to move the company in a strategic direction which employees do not understand or support. The *culture-image gap* concerns misalignments between values of employees and perceptions of external stakeholders. This misalignment may create confusion among stakeholders about what a company stands for. The *image-vision gap* may occur when companies do not sufficiently listen to their stakeholders and create strategic visions that are not aligned with what stakeholders want or expect from the companies, and thus creates misalignments between external stakeholders' images of the company and the management's strategic vision (Hatch and Schultz 2001, 130-132).

External stakeholders' direct experiences and interactions with a company and its members are strong forces in the image-formation process (Hatch and Schultz 1997, 362). When external stakeholders are in direct contact with members of a company they will experience the company's organisational

identity. This is the actual and more real identity of the company since it is not mediated but interpersonal and experienced through interactions with and between members of the company. This will allow the external stakeholders to assess the company's organisational and corporate identity and evaluate an overall perception of the company's identity (Hatch and Schultz in Schultz et al. 2000, 19). Therefore, the company's own identity, both the one projected by the company and the actual one experienced in interactions with members of a company, needs to be aligned with the company's image to create coherence between stakeholders' perceptions of the company.

10. Empirical Data

The following section will account for the selection of empirical data to be applied in the analysis. To support the theoretical foundation, two types of qualitative research will be conducted. First, a sub-analysis of Starbucks' use of communication in relation to the company's identity statements and use of stakeholder communication strategies in three social media channels is conducted. Then, based on the first sub-analysis, interviews are conducted with four Starbucks customers to identify their perceptions of Starbucks' use of communication in the three social media channels and how the use of communication affects the customers' images of the company. The empirical data used as foundation for the thesis are composed of:

- Starbucks' mission statement [Appendix 1]
- Screenshots of Starbucks' posts and comments in three social media channels:
   o Starbucks' fan page on Facebook [Appendix 2] - www.facebook.com/Starbucks
   o Starbucks' corporate blog [Appendix 3] - www.starbucks.com/blog
   o Starbucks' forum MyStarbucksIdea [Appendix 4] - mystarbucksidea.force.com
- Interviews regarding customers' perceptions of Starbucks based on Starbucks' use of communication in three social media channels [Appendix 6].

10.1 Starbucks Company Profile

This section will present a brief profile of Starbucks in order to create a better understanding of the case and the empirical data which will be applied in the sub-analyses.

Origin (Starbucks 2012a)

Starbucks is an American company which was established in Seattle in 1971. Originally, Starbucks was a roaster and retailer of whole bean and ground coffee, tea and spices, but since then the company has expanded its portfolio to include other consumer products as well, such as a broad range of beverages, merchandise and fresh food. This inclusion of new product types which has occurred since 1971 has

coincided with the expansion of Starbucks into markets on all continents, and 40 years after the opening of the first store Starbucks now operates more than 17,000 stores in 60 countries.

The Starbucks Experience (Customeru 2008)

Starbucks is not only about coffee and other food and beverage products. Even more the company focuses on creating a unique experience for every customer every time they visit any of Starbucks' shops and states that it is all about human connection. This unique experience, which has been labelled 'the Starbucks Experience' (Starbucks 2008), has been a main driver behind making Starbucks one of the most popular global brands. The unique experience can be said to consist of three things: the people, the place and the product.

The people, which are the shop employees at Starbucks, or partners as they are called by the company, are one of the most important elements of the customer experience. The employees' joy for coffee and the connection between them and the customers created through brief, informal conversations are part of what creates a pleasant human connection (Customeru 2008).

The place, which is Starbucks' shops, is the context behind the unique experiences and the places where the human connections between staff and customers occur. A large part of what makes the stores a great place for creating good customer experiences is their design, the comfortable atmosphere, and customers' being able to watch and smell the coffee while it is being freshly-made (Ibid.).

The product, which consists primarily of the coffee but also other beverages, food products and merchandise, is the last important element in the unique experience. High-quality products made of ethically sourced raw materials are essential to Starbucks as the company focuses much on both delivering quality products but also have their social responsibility in mind (Ibid.).

Starbucks' Mission Statement [Appendix 1]

Starbucks' mission is *"to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighbourhood at a time"*. To do this, Starbucks has defined a set of principles for all employees in the company, which the company states are lived by every day. The complete mission statement can be found in Appendix 1, but the main themes of the identity principles concern the company's stance on its coffee, employees, customers, stores, neighbourhoods, and shareholders.

10.2 Starbucks in Social Media

As many other companies Starbucks is also present in various online media and utilises different social media channels. Among these social media channels are Starbucks' Facebook fan page, corporate blog and forum for idea innovation and discussion which is known as MyStarbucksIdea.

According to a recent survey (Headstream 2012) Starbucks is ranked 2nd in regards to online social media performance in various social media channels which among others include Facebook and the company's own blogs and forums.

10.2.1 Starbucks' Facebook Fan Page

In the beginning of 2008, Starbucks created its fan page on Facebook, and of January 2013 Starbucks is one of the most popular companies on Facebook with more than 33 million fan members, or likes as they are called on Facebook. Starbucks posts several times every month, and the content of the posts vary much as the topics among other things concern information about social responsibility activities, employees, promotion of products and services, and sharing of Starbucks and users' own photos or recipes.

The Facebook posts which will be used in the first sub-analysis were made by Starbucks in the period July 11-September 29, 2012. Due to the amount of comments in the Facebook posts, only few screenshots have been included in the appendix [Appendix 2] which should provide a representative cross section of all the comments. This is done to improve the overview and reading experience as the screenshots include all the comments which have been applied in the sub-analysis. The Facebook posts and their content will be described more thoroughly in the sub-analysis in section 12.2.1.

10.2.2 Starbucks' Corporate Blog

In March 2009, Starbucks created a corporate blog which is part of the website Starbucks.com. After nearly four years of activity more than 300 posts have been created. In the blog Starbucks' employees, CEO and even external partners write about topics primarily related to Starbucks' products and menus, social responsibility and community activities, and coffeehouses.

Four consecutive blog posts posted by Starbucks employees in the period July 3-September 17, 2012 will be used in the first sub-analysis. The specific content of each blog post will be further elaborated in the sub-analysis in section 12.2.2.

10.2.3 Starbucks' Online Forum "MyStarbucksIdea"

In early 2008, Starbucks created an online forum called MyStarbucksIdea. The purpose of this online community was to improve the knowledge about customers' wants regarding Starbucks' products, stores, community work, etc. by collecting suggestions and feedback from the users of its coffee shops (The Guardian 2008). In the forum users can post suggestions for new ideas, view ideas suggested by other users, and view ideas that have been implemented. The users can vote on other users' ideas which they like, and thus the most popular ideas will become visible to both users and Starbucks.

In the first sub-analysis, four posts from Starbucks' online forum will be used, which were posted in the period March 2-December 27, 2012. The content of these posts will be explained more thoroughly in the sub-analysis in section 12.2.3.

10.3 Customer Interviews

Based on the sub-analysis of Starbucks' use of communication in social media, four qualitative interviews will be conducted regarding the interviewees' perceptions of Starbucks based on the company's use of communication in social media.

An interview guide has been created to structure and improve the interviews, and the interview questions in the interview guide have been based on specific focus areas and thematic research questions related to the theories applied in the thesis. The structure of the interview guide and the contents of the interviews will be explained more thoroughly in the sub-analysis in section 12.3. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 5.

The interviews have been conducted in Danish, but the parts of the interviews which have been used in the analysis have been transcribed into English. The unused parts of the interviews have been summarised in English as well to allow the readers of the thesis to gain an understanding of the content and focus of the entire interviews. As the interviews have been translated, a disadvantage may be that some of the translated wordings are not completely identical to the original expressions, though it has been attempted to maintain the original messages of the interviewees' opinions.

11. Reading Guide

This section will briefly account for the choices made in connection with references to the empirical data, which can be found in the appendix section. The purpose of the reading guide is to give the readers of the thesis a clear overview of how references are made to the empirical data in order to improve the reading experience and thus the understanding of the application of empirical data.

Throughout the thesis, different references will be made to the empirical data which can be found in the appendix.

In relation to the text analysis, each of the three social media channels has been assigned letters and numbers to distinguish them from each other in order to improve and clarify the use of the empirical data. The letters and numbers refer to screenshots of the various posts and comments:

- Starbucks' Facebook page is referred to as [FB] with consecutive numbers indicating the specific posts such as [FB1], [FB2], etc.
    - o Comments by users are indicated with a comma and number in continuation of the reference's number and letter. For example, user comment number 3 in blog post number 1 will be [FB1,3], and user comment number 11 in blog post number 4 will be [FB4,11].
- Starbucks' corporate blog is referred to as [CB] with consecutive numbers indicating the specific posts such as [CB1], [CB2], etc.
    - o Comments by users are indicated in the same way as in the Facebook posts, which is a comma and number in continuation of the reference's number and letter, for example [CB1,3].
- Starbucks' idea forum 'MyStarbucksIdea' is referred to as [IF] with consecutive numbers indicating the specific posts such as [IF1], [IF2], etc.
    - o Comments by users are indicated in the same way as in the Facebook and blog posts, which is a comma and number in continuation of the reference's number and letter, for example [IF1,3].

In relation to the sub-analysis of the interviews, each interviewee has also been assigned a letter and numbers to distinguish them from each other. The interviewees will be referred to as [I1], [I2], etc., and the interviewees' responses will be referred to with minute numbers to indicate where the specific answer can be found in the audio file. For example, an answer by interviewee number two after 12 minutes will be referred to as [I2,12].

12. Analysis

The analysis will be divided into two sub-analyses. The first sub-analysis will focus on Starbucks' use of communication in the three different social media channels which are Starbucks' Facebook page, corporate blog, and forum. The purpose of this sub-analysis is to identify the presence of Starbucks' identity statements in the company's online communication as well as the use of possible

communication strategies by Starbucks in different social media channels. This will be done in order to assess the identity statements and communication strategies' influence on Starbucks' communication with and to the users and how the users are involved in the conversation that takes place online. Furthermore, the sub-analysis will also examine what Starbucks may gain from applying a specific communication strategy, and in the end an assessment will be made regarding if changes or improvements would be beneficial to Starbucks' selection and use of strategies.

The second sub-analysis will focus on few Starbucks' customers' perceptions of Starbucks and how the use of communication in social media influences their images of Starbucks. The sub-analysis will be conducted through qualitative interviews in order to examine the customers' opinions about Starbucks' online communication in a more detailed way.

12.1 Analytical Approach

The analytical approach to be applied in the first sub-analysis will be to analyse text extracts from three social media channels. The presence of identity statements in Starbucks' online communication and the company's use of communication strategies will be analysed through screenshots of selected posts in which the company posts either the original post or comments on other users' posts. The way in which users are participating in discussions and the overall degree of user involvement will be analysed through screenshots of users' comments.

The second sub-analysis will be conducted through qualitative interviews of four Starbucks customers in order to gain a deeper insight into the customers' opinions about Starbucks' use of online communication. The use of qualitative interviews emphasises the interviewees' own points of view, and will make it possible to add new, follow-up questions in order to have interesting and relevant answers elaborated by the interviewees. This will affect the flow of the interview as it will follow a semi-structured interview design. This interview type is based on a set of general questions and topics in which the structure and wording of the questions can be changed during the interview in case the interviewees' answers take the interviews in a different direction. Thus, the interviews will become more flexible and increasingly emphasise the answers which the interviewees perceive as important in explaining different events, patterns or behaviour in relation to the Starbucks case (Bryman 2004, 321). The questions used in the interview can be seen in the interview guide [Appendix 5], which has been created and applied as it is a very useful tool to conduct the interviews and improve the interview quality.

12.2 Sub-Analysis of Starbucks' Use of Communication in Social Media

Starbucks has its own perception about its existence as a business, and as many other companies Starbucks has officially committed these perceptions to paper through the company's mission statement [Appendix 1]. The Starbucks mission is *"to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time."* which is done by complying to a set of principles that focus on the company's coffee, employees, customers, stores, neighbourhoods, and shareholders.

In the sub-analysis, the principles will be included to identify any connection between them, the content that Starbucks communicates about in social media, and also how Starbucks applies any communication strategies. As Starbucks in its mission statement states that these principles are lived by every day it is reasonable to assume that one or more of the principles can be identified in the empirical data which will be applied in this sub-analysis.

In addition, to answer the problem statement it is necessary, as explained in section 9.3.2, to examine Starbucks' corporate identity statements, which are found in the mission statement, as the company's identity affects its communication and thus the images people have of Starbucks.

The sub-analysis section will commence with the analysis of Starbucks' Facebook fan page, followed by the analysis of the company's corporate blog, and lastly, the analysis of Starbucks' forum for idea development called MyStarbucksIdea.

12.2.1 Starbucks' Facebook Fan Page
The following section will analyse the use of communication strategies on Starbucks' company page on Facebook, and four consecutive posts by Starbucks have been selected for the analysis. Furthermore, the analysis will try to identify any connection between the company's use of communication and identity statements.

Facebook Post 1 – "Have you tried the new #StarbucksRefreshers yet?" [FB1]
In the first post by Starbucks a single question which is "*Have you tried the new #StarbucksRefreshers[5] yet?*" is asked and refers to a new type of beverage launched by Starbucks. The question is accompanied by a photo of the drink, a blue sky and the sun, which is likely to associate the drink with being refreshing.

---

[5] In the question, the hash sign is used to connect the post to another social media channel (Twitter) used by Starbucks in order to benefit from the traffic between the different types of social media channels which the company uses.

Figure 9: The photo accompanied with the question asked by Starbucks [FB1].

This post has received 347 user comments which are both positive and negative. The positive comments primarily concern the taste [FB1,4] and look [FB1,27] of the drink, customers' experiences with the drink [FB1,44], and Starbucks in general [FB1,40]. The negative comments are mostly product-related and concern the taste [FB1, 18] and price [FB1,19] of the product. However, many negative comments are related to issues that does not concern the new product, such as rumours about Starbucks not being supportive of US military troops [FB1,77] or avoiding paying company taxes in the United Kingdom [FB1,341]. Even though the theme in the post is the new drink and many comments revolve around it, the users also add comments about many other topics which are not related to the specific question initially asked by Starbucks as a way to air their opinions. In addition, Starbucks has not commented on any of the users' comments, not even the negative ones which may damage the company's image. Discussion between the users or replies by users to other users' comments is also almost non-existing as most comments are replies to Starbucks' initial post.
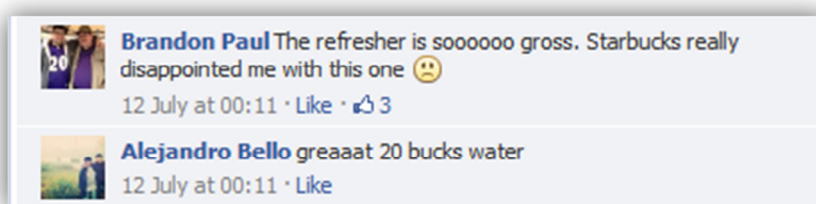
Figure 10: Two users' negative responses to Starbucks' Facebook post [FB1,18-19].

In this Facebook post, Starbucks has applied the persuasive strategy as the company attempts to get feedback from its users by asking a question about the new drink. By asking the users if they have tried the drink, Starbucks both target the users who have actual experiences with the drink to get feedback but also the users who have not tried it, and thus there is also a promotional intention behind asking the question.

The post by Starbucks and a large part of the comments that follow show that the content revolves around not only the product but especially around facilitating positive, emotional responses among the users. Therefore, Starbucks focuses on human connection and creating a short, happy moment for its users.

Facebook Post 2 – "What makes you happy? http://sbux.co/0xooFO" [FB2]

This post contains a single question asked by Starbucks which is *"What makes you happy?"* followed by a link to another social media channel in which Starbucks has posted the same photo as the one posted in this Facebook post. This is among other things done to create a connection between the different social media channels and create more online activity.

The question asked by Starbucks in the Facebook post leaves room for many different answers and related themes, which also is illustrated by the many answers and their various contents. In total, 2,139 comments have been made of which many are positive statements related to Starbucks [FB2,15] and its products [FB2,13] as well as numerous other non-Starbucks related areas [FB2,11+FB,16]. However, a fraction of the users seize the chance to post negative comments to Starbucks, such as regarding rumours about Starbucks not being supportive of US military troops [FB2,1491].
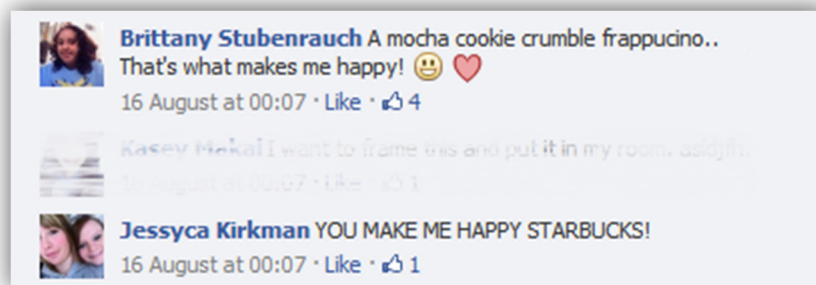
Figure 11: Users posting positive comments to Starbucks' question [FB2,13 & FB2,15].

Among the many comments only one belongs to Starbucks which is a response to several users' negative comments about Starbucks not being supportive of US military troops. Starbucks attempts to disprove the rumour by referring to one the company's press releases about the subject and in this way improve the perceptions of the company. Nearly all comments are replies to Starbucks' initial post, and thus there is not much discussion occurring between the users.

Figure 12: Starbucks' only comment in the post is a response to a supposedly false rumour [FB2,1496].

Starbucks has applied the persuasive strategy in this post. Though the answers to the question concern many different themes, many answers are related to Starbucks and the company's products. Thereby, Starbucks receives feedback and creates awareness about the company and its products but also attempts to improve the perceptions of the company and its products in a way that is favourable to Starbucks. There is not much deeper conversation going on in the post as most of the comments are simple replies to Starbucks' question.

As the question in this post is not directly concerned with Starbucks or any of its products but rather anything positive that comes into mind for the users, Starbucks attempts to create positive emotions among its users by encouraging them to share the things which make them happy. This means that Starbucks has created a post with a theme with the purpose of making the users feel good regardless of it being only briefly, and thus it reflects the company's customer-related identity principles.

Facebook Post 3 – "One more round" [FB3]
The third Facebook post contains a statement by Starbucks which says *"One more round"*. The text is accompanied by a photo which focuses on a coffee cup and has a blurred Ferris wheel in the background perhaps to associate the text *"One more round"* with having another round of coffee.

47

Figure 13: The photo accompanied by the text *"One more round"* in Starbucks' Facebook post [FB3].

This post does not contain a question aimed at the users but instead a statement that the users may relate to. This affects the replies by the users as the comments concern many different topics, but many of the comments refer to Starbucks [FB3,34] and its products [FB3,6], users' immediate feelings [FB3,15], and generally just positive expressions by the users [FB3,10]. Besides the numerous positive statements, negative comments are also posted by some users. The negative utterances concern the need for more Starbucks shops [FB3,17], Starbucks' products [FB3,46], and two recurring subjects which are a rumour that Starbucks is unsupportive of US military troops [FB3,350] and an issue of possible tax avoidance by Starbucks in the United Kingdom [FB3,2459].

Though there are almost 2,500 comments in this post only one belongs to Starbucks and once again concerns the refutation by Starbucks of a negative rumour about the company [FB3,355]. The large majority of the replies are users' direct responses to Starbucks' original post rather than replies to other users' comments which mean that the degree of discussion between the users is very low.

Figure 14: Once again Starbucks responds to a negative comment about the company [FB3,355].

With this post and its ambiguous statement, Starbucks attempts to create positive associations both to the Ferris wheel and the coffee. Starbucks refers to its coffee as of good quality and worth drinking more of while also trying to create positive feelings regarding the Ferris wheel. Thus, it is possible to connect the content of the post with Starbucks' focus on the quality of its coffee but also with trying to create content that affects the users positively and emotionally. The latter is also evident with the numerous positive comments made to Starbucks' post.

Facebook Post 4 – "Today and every day! #NationalCoffeeDay" [FB4]

This post contains the statement *"Today and every day! #NationalCoffeeDay"*[6], and a photo of a coffee tree and a coffee bean with a speech bubble that says *"Best day ever!",* which may seem like a strong indication by Starbucks that each day should be celebrated as a national coffee holiday.

This post has received around 800 user comments which range from very positive to very negative. The positive comments concern among other things users sharing their joy of Starbucks [FB4,6], hopes of receiving free coffee [FB4,2], and agreement with the statement of every day being a coffee day [FB4,21]. On the negative side many users also show their disappointment in Starbucks' lack of gratitude towards loyal customers [FB4,56]. What is even worse for Starbucks is that a large group of users express their discontent with Starbucks regarding the company's tax avoidance issues in the United Kingdom [FB4,774], and some users even propose a boycott of the company's products [FB4,775].

---

[6] As in the first Facebook post Starbucks has connected this post and the photo to another social media channel (Twitter) by using the hash sign in the sentence in order to create more user activity between the social media channels.

Figure 15: Users show their discontent with Starbucks' tax payments issues in the UK [FB4,773-75].

Starbucks has applied the persuasive strategy in this blog post as the purpose very much seems to be to create a positive attitude among the users who should regard every day as a national coffee holiday. Creating this perception among the users clearly is favourable to Starbucks, and thus a clear move towards improving the view of the company and its coffee. Though many users agree with Starbucks on the matter and reply positively to the company's statement, many users are less well-disposed towards Starbucks and use the opportunity to express their discontent which at some point also forces Starbucks to respond and disprove negative rumours about the company.

With the attempt to create a positive attitude among the users and encourage them to perceive every day as a national coffee day, Starbucks focuses on creating positive, emotional content that not only is concerned with providing positive moments for the users but also can be connected to the company's identity principles concerning its quality coffee.

Summary of Main Findings

The analysis of the four Facebook posts by Starbucks shows that the persuasive communication strategy has been applied in all posts. By applying this strategy, Starbucks attempts to change the attitude and behaviour of its users in ways which are favourable to the company, such as through improved perceptions of the company and its products.

The use of the persuasive strategy also entails two-way asymmetrical communication. Through Starbucks' initial posts the company tries to involve the users by addressing topics that users associate positively with Starbucks and its products and by getting feedback from the users in ways that are advantageous to the company. Though much of this feedback indeed is positive and concerns the

company and its products, some comments are, however, very negative towards Starbucks. Many of these negative comments are not even directly connected to the specific theme of the individual posts, which indicates that some users address Starbucks negatively regardless of the themes of the specific posts. The four posts have resulted in thousands of comments but these have primarily been replies to the initial posts by Starbucks. Thus, not much real discussion has occurred between the users or between Starbucks and the users. Only in very few instances has Starbucks responded to user comments which concerned the very negative statements and rumours that could be harmful to the company.
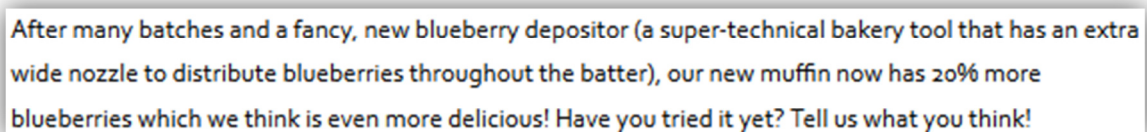
The fact that Starbucks' posts primarily focus on creating content that targets the users' positive emotions and to some degree also focuses on promoting the company's products is in line with its use of the persuasive strategy. Starbucks seems to use its Facebook fan page as a way to post about various topics that appeal to its users as much of the content revolves around the users' immediate feelings and emotional statements regarding Starbucks and its products as a means to improve the perception of Starbucks. Starbucks simply has a monitoring role in order to prevent the most negative comments from damaging the company. Thus, it is the users who jointly take care of commenting and creating most of the content in the Facebook posts based on Starbucks' original posts.

12.2.2 Starbucks' Corporate Blog

This section will analyse the use of communication strategies in Starbucks' corporate blog for which four consecutive blog posts have been selected. The analysis will also attempt to identify any connection between the company's identity statements and its use of communication in the blog posts.

Blog Post 1 – "Bursting with Blueberries" [CB1]

The first blog post is written by an employee from Starbucks' marketing department and concerns the introduction of an improved variant of one of Starbucks' muffins. The style in the text is rather personal and informal as the writer refers to her own childhood memories of baking muffins as well as using the word *"yummy"*. The personal story leads to the introduction of the improved product variant at Starbucks, and, in the end, the writer moves the focus away from herself and the introduction of the product to the readers by asking them to share their own personal experiences with the product.

> After many batches and a fancy, new blueberry depositor (a super-technical bakery tool that has an extra wide nozzle to distribute blueberries throughout the batter), our new muffin now has 20% more blueberries which we think is even more delicious! Have you tried it yet? Tell us what you think!

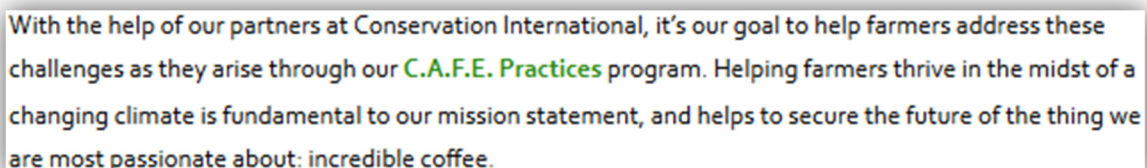Figure 16: Use of questions to involve readers in blog conversation [CB1].

Three users have commented on the post by sharing their experiences with the product. All three comments are positive statements about the product, and one user even refers back to the writer's own experience of baking muffins by describing the product positively as homemade with the comment *"Tasty as promised ..a real home made treat!"* [CB1,1].

This blog post is characterised by a use of both the informational and persuasive strategy. The informational strategy is experienced as the writer informs the readers about the improved product variant through one-way communication in order to create awareness. In addition, the persuasive strategy is applied as the writer also attempts to initiate discussion and gain an understanding of the readers' experiences with the product. This is done by concluding the blog post with a question aimed at the readers and encouraging them to share their thoughts in order to involve them in the conversation. As the author is from the marketing department the purpose of the post is most likely also to promote the product in order to increase sales which is seen by the use of positively loaded adjectives, such as *'deliciously tasty idea'* and *'fancy, new blueberry depositor'*.

With the specific reference to the author's childhood memories as well as the active involvement of the users to share their experiences and opinions, the post to some degree reflects Starbucks' customer-related identity principles as the company attempts to positively affect the connection with the customers and engage them in the conversation.

Blog Post 2 – "Helping Sumatran Farmers Respond to Climate Change" [CB2]
The author of the second blog post works with social responsibility, and the main theme of this blog post concerns social responsibility and more specifically ethical sourcing in relation to Starbucks' suppliers. The writer outlines the challenges of climate change and its impact on coffee farmers around the world which of course is a matter of great importance to Starbucks in order to survive. Then, the writer focuses on Starbucks' cooperation with other business partners in an attempt to secure the survival of both the farmers and coffee production in general, which is also mentioned as a fundamental part of Starbucks' mission statement.

> With the help of our partners at Conservation International, it's our goal to help farmers address these challenges as they arise through our C.A.F.E. Practices program. Helping farmers thrive in the midst of a changing climate is fundamental to our mission statement, and helps to secure the future of the thing we are most passionate about: incredible coffee.

Figure 17: Helping coffee farmers to survive is an integral part of Starbucks' mission [CB2].

The style of writing in this blog post is rather formal exemplified in the use of words such as *"yield"*, *"contend with"*, and *"coffee production"*, but as the context related to social responsibility is an important and serious matter the choice of writing styles makes sense.
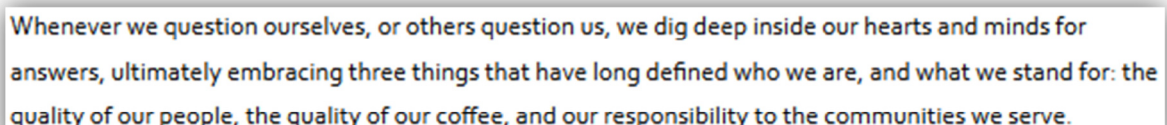
In this blog post two users have commented with rather negative comments. One of them questions the motives behind the Starbucks post in relation to unspecified details [CB2,1] while the other wonders about the reasons of the farmers concerned for staying in unfavourable production locations [CB2,3].

This blog post uses the informational strategy and one-way symmetrical communication. The aim for Starbucks is to communicate objective information about a serious matter, and inform users about how Starbucks is being socially responsible through cooperation with partners to improve the survival conditions for coffee farmers. Furthermore, several links are highlighted which can provide additional information about Starbucks' partners and their joint activities of helping coffee farmers. The use of the informational strategy works as means to create awareness about Starbucks' work with social responsibility, and in this way Starbucks account for its decisions regarding the specific social responsibility activities.

Starbucks' concern regarding coffee farmers is connected to the company's identity principles of protecting the coffee farmers and improving their lives in order to ensure a sustainable and ethical coffee production. This is the company's foundation and thus essential to focus on.

Blog Post 3 – "Message from Howard: Looking Back to Look Forward" [CB3]
The third blog post is a letter written by the CEO of Starbucks, Howard Schultz, and concerns his 30th anniversary at Starbucks. In his post, Schultz looks back at his time at Starbucks and the development that he and the company have experienced through the last three decades. Furthermore, he highlights the features which have developed Starbucks into one of the most well-known companies in the world, and he also looks at the future of the company and how to continue being successful.

Whenever we question ourselves, or others question us, we dig deep inside our hearts and minds for answers, ultimately embracing three things that have long defined who we are, and what we stand for: the quality of our people, the quality of our coffee, and our responsibility to the communities we serve.
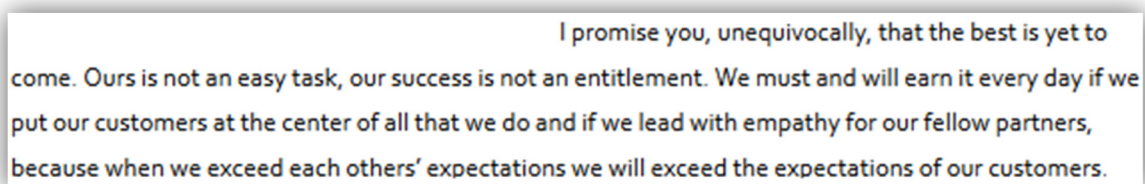
Figure 18: Starbucks' CEO Howard Schultz' perception of what characterises Starbucks [CB3].

In the blog post, Schultz addresses all employees in Starbucks, or partners as they are called, and this influences the style of the post. Schultz uses an informal and personal writing style as he shares his

feelings and experiences from his time at Starbucks, uses many personal pronouns, and attempts to address the letter directly to each reader such as by writing *"As I write this letter to you…"* and *"I promise you"*.

No users have commented on the blog post. There could be many reasons for this, and whether this is due to the sender being the CEO of Starbucks or that the post is designed as a personal letter and seems very informative rather than having the purpose of creating dialogue or discussion is not possible to say.

In this blog post both the informative and persuasive strategies have been applied. The informational strategy is applied through the use of one-way communication, and the purpose of this personal letter is for the CEO to address all employees to share his feelings and experiences from his time in the company. The use of the persuasive strategy is also seen as Schultz explains his vision for the future of Starbucks. Thereby, he attempts not only to create a sense of understanding among the employees about how to maintain the company's current and possibly future success. He also tries to motivate the employees and create a sense of community as well as provide advice about how to make the company better in the future.

> I promise you, unequivocally, that the best is yet to come. Ours is not an easy task, our success is not an entitlement. We must and will earn it every day if we put our customers at the center of all that we do and if we lead with empathy for our fellow partners, because when we exceed each others' expectations we will exceed the expectations of our customers.

Figure 19: Starbucks' CEO Howard Schultz' view on what is required by Starbucks to continue its success [CB3].
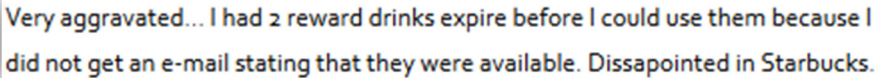
Starbucks' CEO shows his gratitude and respect for the company's employees with this post but also attempts to unite them and create a positive spirit which the employees can use to improve the company in the future. By addressing the employees and sharing his strong feelings for them and the company, Starbucks' identity principle regarding the employees is reflected in this blog post.

Blog Post 4 – "Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier)" [CB4]

The director of a Starbucks membership programme is the author of the fourth blog post. In this post he writes about Starbucks' use of customer feedback from various social media channels which now have led to the introduction of an improved reward programme for Starbucks' customers. In the post, benefits of the new programme are described as well as changes that have been made to it.

The style in the post is rather informal as the writer is using word contractions, such as *'you're'* and *'let's'*, which makes the post seem more personal by resembling spoken language. By writing his given name only rather than his full name and by concluding the post with a kind salutation the writer makes the blog post seem more personal.

In this blog post 46 user comments have been made. The large majority of the comments are negative as users are complaining about the new system and the loss of many previous benefits. Some users refer to the changes and describe the programme as confusing [CB4,28], faulty [CB4,3], and more favourable to Starbucks rather than to its customers [CB4,5].
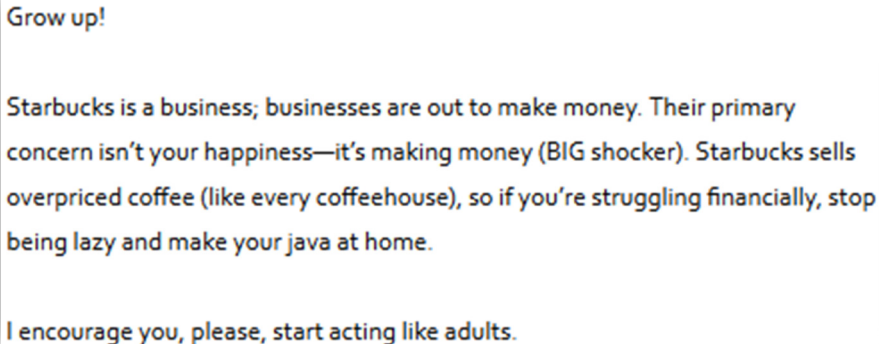

Very aggravated… I had 2 reward drinks expire before I could use them because I did not get an e-mail stating that they were available. Dissapointed in Starbucks.

Figure 20: One of many negative comments about the new Starbucks reward programme [CB4,3].

Not all comments are negative statements aimed at Starbucks, but one user explains Starbucks' actions by addressing the dissatisfied customers [CB4,14].
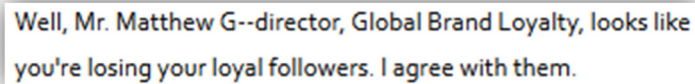
Grow up!

Starbucks is a business; businesses are out to make money. Their primary concern isn't your happiness—it's making money (BIG shocker). Starbucks sells overpriced coffee (like every coffeehouse), so if you're struggling financially, stop being lazy and make your java at home.

I encourage you, please, start acting like adults.

Figure 21: A user defends Starbucks' actions by addressing the dissatisfied customers [CB4,14].
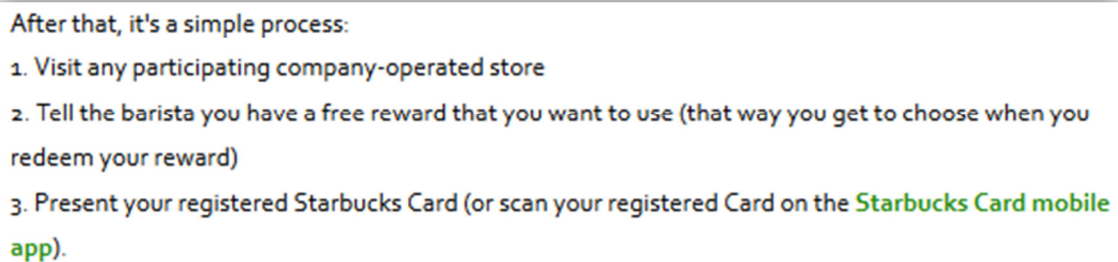
Out of 46 comments none are by Starbucks employees. There may be many reasons to this such as indifference by the employees or that the individual blog posts are not being monitored. Either way Starbucks sends the wrong signals to the users whose frustration is growing as they are not receiving any feedback or explanations to various problems they are experiencing with the new programme changes. Some users respond to other users' comments either by adding additional questions to increase the confusion and frustration [CB4,5] while other users show their agreement with the user's opinion [CB4,2].

Well, Mr. Matthew G--director, Global Brand Loyalty, looks like you're losing your loyal followers. I agree with them.

Figure 22: One user's opinion about the result of the programme changes [CB4,25].

Both the informative and the persuasive communication strategies have been applied in the blog post. The informational strategy is seen as the writer through one-way communication informs the readers of the scope and success of the reward programme in order to create awareness about the programme and the influence it has had on Starbucks and its customers. The use of the persuasive strategy is seen as the writer attempts to change the readers' behaviour and opinions by promoting the programme and its new benefits while also promoting the process in which customers can obtain the benefits through the use of a reward programme card or a mobile application. In addition, the blog post is concluded with a request by the writer to the readers to give feedback through Starbucks' idea forum MyStarbucksIdea, and thus the writer actively seeks a response from the readers.

After that, it's a simple process:
1. Visit any participating company-operated store
2. Tell the barista you have a free reward that you want to use (that way you get to choose when you redeem your reward)
3. Present your registered Starbucks Card (or scan your registered Card on the Starbucks Card mobile app).

Figure 23: Starbucks uses the persuasive strategy to promote the reward programme [CB4].

In this post Starbucks expresses gratitude to the users by referring to all the users who have contributed with ideas and feedback through some of Starbucks' social media channels and emphasises that the users have influenced the developments of the company's rewards programme. However, many comments to the statement by Starbucks are negative and urge the company to answer and help the many frustrated customers who are experiencing the changes as inconvenient. If Starbucks had shown more interest and visible activity in helping or at least just responded the unsatisfied users, the company's identity principle related to its customers as being fully engaged and creating a positive connection to them would have been reflected in the post. Instead, Starbucks' lack of presence in this forum thread makes the users unhappy, and they perceive Starbucks as not caring about its customers.

Summary of Main Findings

After analysing the four blog posts written by some of Starbucks' employees and the CEO, the main findings show that Starbucks has applied the informational strategy in all four blog posts and to some degree also the persuasive strategy.

The use of the informational strategy entails use of one-way symmetrical communication as the writers have attempted to create awareness about various topics related to Starbucks. At the same time, the purpose also seems to be to explain the company's decisions to the readers and create an understanding of the decision-making. The use of the persuasive strategy occurs when the writers are interested in promoting Starbucks, its products and services in order to influence the readers' knowledge and opinions. It may also be used to change the behaviour and attitude of the employees to improve their understanding of what is required in the future to remain a successful company. This is obviously favourable to Starbucks as it may lead to a more positive view of the company and its products externally by the customers as well as create more positive perceptions internally by the employees.

Users have commented on three of the four blog posts, and most comments have been made in connection with the posts that have applied the persuasive strategy rather than the informational strategy. The reason for this is among other things that the writers of these posts have attempted to include the readers in the conversation, such as by asking questions and encouraging the readers to provide feedback about their experiences and opinions. It also seems that users have become more involved in the blog posts by actively commenting on them when the writers used an informal and personal style of writing. Starbucks has not replied to any of the users' comments, which may seem strange as one blog post in particular [CB4] is full of negative comments from frustrated and confused users. There are only few examples of users replying to other users' comments, and thus most comments are direct responses to Starbucks' blog posts in contrast to discussions between the users.

The blog posts also reflect Starbucks' mission statements and projected identity to some degree. Through the content in the blog posts Starbucks shows a concern for its coffee and the farmers who produce it by informing about the company's strong focus on ethical sourcing and efforts to improve the farmers' lives. In addition, Starbucks also emphasises the importance of its employees by attempting to create a sense of unity and being respectful to the employees. However, in connection with the identity principles of its customers both positive and negative examples were found. One blog post creates positive emotions and comments from the users while another has the very opposite outcome. Many users are frustrated and unhappy but receive no help or response from Starbucks, and

thus the company does not live up to its promises of engaging with the customers and creating a positive atmosphere.

12.2.3 Starbucks' Idea Forum

The following section will analyse Starbucks' use of communication strategies in the company's idea forum called MyStarbucksIdea, as well as try to identify any connection to the company's identity statements. Compared to the posts in Starbucks' corporate blog and on its Facebook page, the posts in the idea forum have users as authors and not Starbucks' employees. Three of the four posts which have been selected for the analysis have been assigned a label in the forum by Starbucks depending on their status regarding possible implementation. The labels that posts can receive by Starbucks are *"Launched"*, *"Coming Soon"* and *"Under Review/In the Works"* while all other posts do not receive a designation.

Forum Post 1 – "Orange Lids" [IF1]

The first post concerns a user's suggestion that Starbucks for one week uses orange lids on some of its beverages to raise awareness in connection with the disease Multiple Sclerosis.

76 comments have been made to this post and almost all are positive comments either from users who are being supportive of the suggestion [IF1,8], adding additional benefits to the suggestion [IF1,11], or comments by persons who have the disease themselves and calls for the attention of this suggestion by Starbucks [IF1,12]. Very few users are less positive and state that other diseases should not be neglected [IF1,74] or that the cause should not affect prices to cover additional costs [IF1,58].
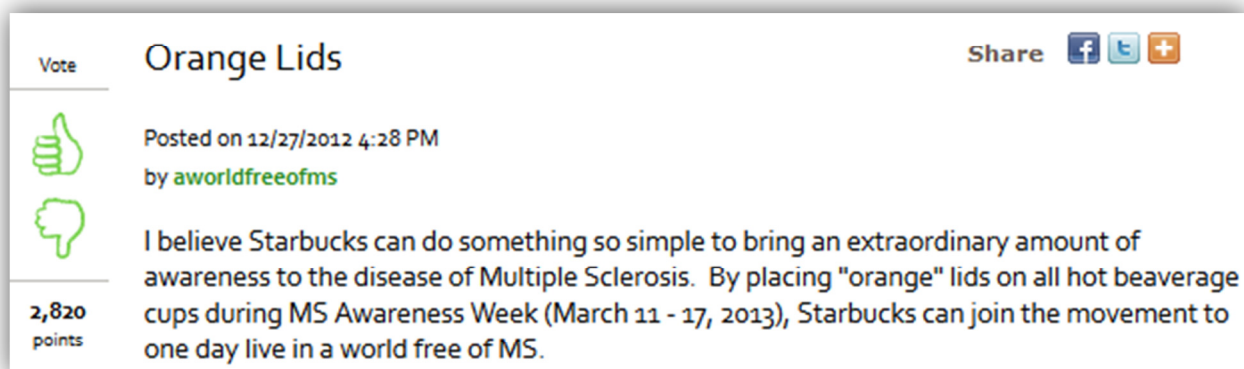
Figure 24: A user posts a suggestion for raising awareness of a disease [IF1].

As this post has not received an official label regarding implementation by Starbucks or any comments from the company, it is unclear if the user's idea will be carried out. For the same reason, it is also difficult to say much about Starbucks' use of communication strategy at this point in time. It may be

that Starbucks does not comment on idea suggestions unless they are very interesting and favourable to implement, and thus the initial conversation occurs between the users before a response is made by Starbucks. It may also be that Starbucks awaits the result of the discussion between the users to see if other changes or developments of the suggested idea are made. Though Starbucks has not replied to any of the users' messages the dialogue strategy is present to some degree as the users actively are discussing the idea and contributing with changes and improvements.

Forum Post 2 – "Speedy way to order a favorite drink" [IF2]

This post concerns improving the ease by which customers can use a mobile application to customise and order drinks, and also ease the work of the employees who make the drinks.

The post has received 25 comments from both users and Starbucks employees. The user comments are primarily positive and the users express their agreement with the idea [IF2,5], propose changes or additions to the original idea [IF2,16], and add suggestions to improve the mobile application [IF2,10]. One of the positive comments belongs to a user who identifies himself as an employee at a Starbucks shop and states that implementing this idea would ease both the employees' work and make the shop experience better for the customers [IF2,3]. The only negative comment concerns a user who suggests that Starbucks should fix errors in the mobile application before new features are implemented [IF2,8].
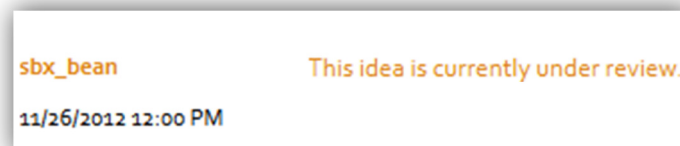
Figure 25: The comment by a Starbucks employee to inform users of the idea's status [IF2,1].

After discussion between the users and support being shown both from users and a Starbucks shop employee, the idea has become closed by Starbucks and has received the designation "Under Review". A comment has also been added by a Starbucks employee [IF2,1] to notify the users of the suggestion's current status.

Starbucks only officially appears once in this forum thread as an employee provides the users with a notification of the idea's current status as being under review by Starbucks. Thus, there is not much dialogue between the company and its users, but the only sign of discussion is experienced among the users who have commented on the idea. However, the users do have provided various suggestions of changes and additions to the proposed idea. Thereby, the dialogue strategy is to some degree apparent

as the users attempt to improve the idea jointly to make it more useful to the users and relevant to implement by Starbucks.

The single comment from the Starbucks employee only informs the users of the idea's status and is not reflecting the company's identity statements. However, had the employee also shared his/her opinion and agreed with the users or expressed the company's gratitude to them for their contribution, then this would be related to the customer-related principles and perhaps have made the users think more positively about the connection between themselves and Starbucks in contrast to only making this rather impersonal comment.

Forum Post 3 – "Bring the vanilla spice latte to the US!!" [IF3]
The third post concerns a user's suggestion that Starbucks should consider offering a product variant which is available on the UK market on the US market as well.

The post has 19 comments of which the large majority is positive statements regarding support of the idea [IF3,6], suggestions for the ingredients in the drink [IF3,13], and comparison of the drink with other Starbucks drinks [IF3,10]. Some discussion also occur as few users keep responding to each other's comments [IF3,5+IF3,8].

Along with the many comments, a Starbucks employee also gets involved in the conversation by sharing his/her opinion about the drink [IF3,12]. Furthermore, the employee also addresses the other users by encouraging them to continue sharing their votes and comments on this idea, and in this way further discussion is recommended by the employee to know more users' opinions about the drink. In the end, the same employee states that Starbucks is interested in the idea and will provide news about it soon [IF3,19]. In addition, the idea receives the label "Coming Soon" to inform users about its status as being implemented soon by Starbucks.
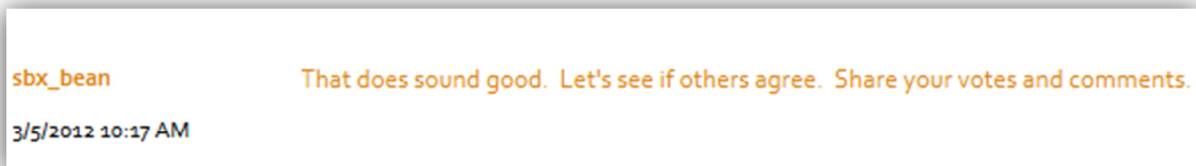
Figure 26: A Starbucks employee shares his/her opinion and encourages more activity [IF3,12].

In this forum thread most comments belong to the users who are expressing their opinions about the idea and attempt to improve it together by suggesting changes and additions. However, not all comments are only replies but some conversation occurs between few of the users. Starbucks also

shows its presence by participating in the conversation as an employee shares his/her personal opinion and encourages more discussion and sharing of opinions by the users. This shows that the employee is trying to involve the users in the dialogue in order to improve the idea and thereby make it better for the customers but also for Starbucks which hopefully will experience more satisfied customers, and thus the dialogue strategy has been applied.

Compared to the previous forum posts [IF1+IF2], Starbucks is more active in this forum thread. Two comments are made in which the Starbucks employee expresses his/her personal opinion and encourages more discussion and activity among the users. In the end, the employee states that Starbucks finds the idea interesting as the idea is being worked on and that the users soon will receive information about the implementation of the idea. This positive way of interacting with the users and responding to their comments shows that Starbucks attempts to create a positive connection with its users and shows interest in them which reflects the company's customer-related identity principles.

Forum Post 4 – "Tell me when my rewards are expiring!" [IF4]

The fourth post concerns a user's request for Starbucks to make changes to its mobile application to inform users when their rewards are about to expire and thereby enhance the user experience of the application and improve Starbucks' customer service.

This idea has received 15 comments which are both positive and negative. The positive comments regard other users who show their agreement with the idea [IF4,4], suggest changes or improvements to the idea [IF4,13], and support the user because of negative comments about the idea or the user [IF4,8]. The rather negative comments concern users who explain to the author where to find the information and how the application works [IF4,2], criticise the author's lack of will and effort to find the information [IF4,3], criticise the application and Starbucks [IF4,14], and state that this post is just another unimportant complaint [IF4,7]. In continuation of this idea a Starbucks employee addresses the users who have commented on the idea with a statement [IF4,15] appreciating the users' input, and how the idea and the reward programme has been developed since the first post was written by the user. A link has also been included to provide users with more information about the changes.
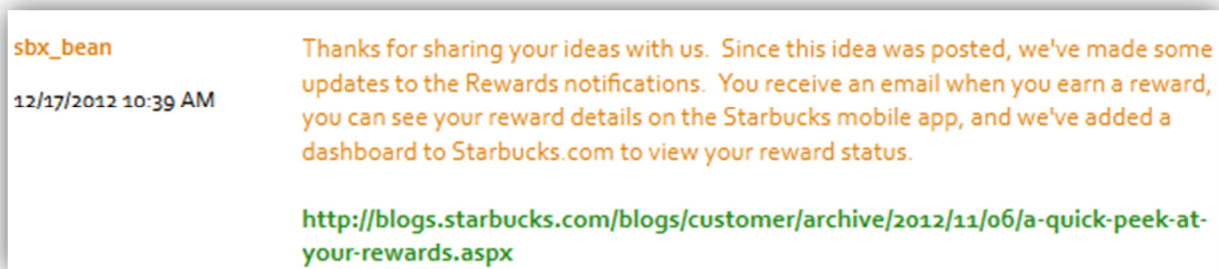
Figure 27: A Starbucks employee thanks the users and updates them about the idea's status [IF4,15].

Only one comment in this forum thread belongs to an employee from Starbucks, and the comment is used to close the thread for additional comments by thanking the users for their contributions. At the same time, the thread receives the designation "Launched" as it has been implemented by Starbucks. Much of the conversation revolves around the users' comments of which many are negative and focus on criticising the idea and the author, but one user defends the author and actively supports the idea as she attempts to reason with the negative-minded users. However, some users do actually focus on the content of the suggested idea, and the responses result in Starbucks acknowledging the users' ideas and the fact that changes had to be made. Overall, some useful discussion occurs, and the dialogue strategy is present to some degree, but more activity by Starbucks and less personal criticism by some users may have resulted in a more constructive discussion though some changes in the end were made to the application because of this forum thread.

By expressing gratitude to the users for their contributions and comments and informing about the changes that have been made based partly on the users' feedback, Starbucks shows interest in its users and appreciates them which is likely to be perceived positively by the users. Thereby, Starbucks' comment reflects the company's identity principles which are concerned with the customers.

Summary of Main Findings

The analysis of Starbucks' use of communication strategies in its idea forum MyStarbucksIdea shows that the dialogue strategy is applied by Starbucks. This makes good sense as the purpose of the forum is that discussions are initiated by users who post their ideas to share them with other users and Starbucks (Starbucks 2012b). However, the dialogue strategy seems only to be applied to some degree by Starbucks. Even though the users are responsible for posting ideas, Starbucks is not very active once some of the ideas have received many comments or votes and thus are relevant and interesting to the users. Obviously, it is not possible to respond to all ideas but those who are popular among the users and may have potential could be improved further if Starbucks attempted to create further discussion between the users by asking them additional questions, such as regarding their wants and

preferences in connection with the specific ideas. Starbucks primarily leaves the users to discuss changes or improvements of ideas while the company's employees remain in the background to monitor users' comments and most often only show their presence by stating the ideas' change of status.

Comments have been made to all posts (76, 25, 19, and 15 comments respectively) and the large majority belongs to users who often just agree with the authors' suggestions or even suggest changes and additions to improve the original ideas. This process of discussing and improving the suggested ideas jointly leads to many positive comments that are useful for Starbucks in identifying the users' opinions and wants. However, Starbucks' employees are not participating much and primarily only monitor the discussions to inform users about the ideas' status if they are very likely to be implemented.

Using the dialogue strategy should allow both Starbucks and the forum users to share and discuss ideas and opinions. However, Starbucks does not attempt to have ideas or comments elaborated by the users to gain more information about their opinions, wants and preferences, which in the end could provide Starbucks with even more, useful knowledge.

The comments by the Starbucks employees do to some degree reflect some of the company's identity principles. The focus is only on the customer-related identity principle, but this is most likely due to the content of the four forum ideas which all concern either Starbucks' products or services. Some of the employees' comments show interest in the users by sharing personal opinions and encouraging the users to share their thoughts and experiences which create a positive connection between the company and its users. However, Starbucks' activity in some forum threads is rather unimpressive either because there is no response from Starbucks at all, though this could be due to the volume of threads in the forum, or because the comments are only formal and informative and thereby not really connecting with the users.

12.2.4 Sub-Conclusion

After conducting the three analysis parts in connection with Starbucks' use of communication in three different social media channels the results showed several interesting findings. Starbucks applies all three communication strategies in different situations and with different purposes, and the company's identity statements are to some degree reflected in the posts and comments.

On Facebook, Starbucks has applied the persuasive strategy in order to affect the users' attitudes towards the company and its products which may possibly affect the users' behaviour as well. In practice, Starbucks attempts to address the users' feelings and create emotional content, and the

outcome of this could among other things be improved perceptions of the company and additional sales. Most of the feedback is positive replies to Starbucks' posts which make the amount of discussion very limited, and Starbucks only appears to respond to very negative comments levelled against the company. As the Facebook page is a fan page it makes sense that Starbucks leaves the initiative to discuss to the users while the company observes from the background. It is a channel for the users to talk about Starbucks, but Starbucks is of course interested in making sure that the content is positive regarding the users' perceptions of Starbucks, and thus the approach seems reasonable.

In Starbucks' corporate blog posts the informative and to some degree also the persuasive strategies have been applied. Through the informational strategy Starbucks attempts to inform stakeholders via objective information and account for corporate decisions. However, with the persuasive strategy, the aim is to promote the company and its products to improve the perception of Starbucks among its external stakeholders but also to instil confidence internally among the company's employees. Using the persuasive strategy also results in more comments and feedback compared to the use of the informational strategy as the users are being involved which creates some discussion. However, much of the feedback is negative resulting in frustrated and confused customers, and Starbucks is not showing any presence in the blog posts as no comments have been made by the company. Starbucks would benefit more from actively taking part in the conversation as this possibly could resolve the users' problems and requests, lead to more constructive discussions, and improve the users' blog experiences all of which would benefit both the users and Starbucks.

In Starbucks' forum the only communication strategy applied is the dialogue strategy which makes sense as the purpose of the forum is for users and Starbucks to collaborate in creating new ideas which can be implemented by the company. However, the strategy is only applied to some degree as constructive discussions and dialogue mostly occur between the users while Starbucks only monitors the dialogue and notifies the users if an idea is relevant for implementation. In this connection, Starbucks could show more interest in some of the popular ideas and ask the users additional questions about their opinions and wants in order to improve the outcome of the ideas to both the users and to Starbucks.

The various principles in Starbucks' mission statement and thus the company's identity are to some degree reflected in the posts and comments made by Starbucks. When present, Starbucks shows concern for its suppliers, users and employees in a positive and relevant way. However, when the identity principles are not present this is experienced through posts and comments which seem far less positive to the readers, and thus less interesting and relevant which in some instances create a rather negative perception by the readers.

It is clear that Starbucks has applied different communicative strategies in the social media channels dependent on the purpose and desired outcomes of each of these channels. Though the strategies to a large extent create the expected results which are positive to Starbucks there is room for improvement. This is particularly evident in the corporate blog as many frustrated and unhappy users feel neglected, which creates frustration and negative perceptions of Starbucks. The company could prevent or at least reduce these issues by showing more concern for and interest in the users through increased online activity and dialogue in the blog posts.

12.3 Sub-Analysis of Interviews

In the interviews, specific focus areas have been selected as the central themes. These areas are connected to the specific theories applied in the thesis, which are social media, stakeholders, identity and image, and they are also connected to the first sub-analysis regarding Starbucks' use of social media communication. Prior to conducting the interviews, an interview guide has been created as it is a very useful tool to improve the overview and structure of the interview. The interview guide also helps to ensure that the interviews will cover the predetermined focus areas which are required to answer the problem statement (Kvale 2007, 57-60).

The interview guide comprises two sets of questions which are theory-based research questions and interviewer questions. The research questions relate to the before-mentioned thematic focus areas, whereas the interview questions are based on the research questions and are necessary in order to obtain information from the interviewees (Ibid., 58-59). The interview guide can be found in Appendix 5.

12.3.1 Interview 1
The first interviewee is Margit, a 59-year-old female who has retired from the labour market, and has visited Starbucks on several occasions.

Social Media
Margit thinks social media is very useful and a good tool to communicate with friends and family [I1,0]. She also feels that social media makes it easier for her to be updated about different things related to her family, friends and other interests, such as sports clubs [I1,1]. Social media is not only a fast way to communicate with people or stay updated about companies and their websites but it is also useful as way to search for information. She does not think social media brings many problems except that sometimes things may go too fast [I1,1-2].

In her opinion it is natural for companies to use social media as a means to communicate and that no negative things come with their use of social media [I1,2-3]. She finds it positive that companies are easier to contact rather than having to visit them physically, and that it is possible to have a direct conversation with them online [I1,2-3].

Identity/Image

Margit thinks that certain types of acts or contents provided by a company in social media could influence her view of the company. She finds it positive if a company shares positive messages about its products as things companies sell generally are what people notice, and she also emphasises companies' possibility to express their opinions [I1,4-5]. In social media, companies should focus both on what users are interested in and the companies' own messages. The companies should also observe the conversations and notice any potential buyers' opinions, and to some degree she believes that companies' concern in its online users matters for the people who use social media [I1,5-6].

To her, it is positive if companies participate in online discussions as it creates dialogue between the companies and their customers which can be used to collaborate and identify the products that customers want [I1,7]. If companies do not participate in online discussions she thinks this shows that the companies are too passive and uninterested in the customers' opinions, and again she emphasises that both companies and customers should be a part of the discussions [I1,8].

Communication

Margit thinks that Starbucks' way of writing to its users in social media can affect her view of the company and that this perception also may be affected when visiting Starbucks' physical shops [I1,9].

In connection with the specific examples of Starbucks' use of communication in social media, she has a positive perception of the Facebook page as the posts by Starbucks are conspicuous and makes one happy and curious by looking at them [I1,11-12]. Regarding the blog examples, she expects Starbucks to write about its products but says that writing about other topics, such as those related to social responsibility and employees, is a very positive thing as some customers may want to know about other things than Starbucks' products. She also finds it positive that the company not only addresses customers but also other stakeholders, such as employees [I1,13-14]. The posts in Starbucks' idea forum are perceived as both positive and negative. She finds one response by Starbucks [IF3,12] inadequate and feels that information is lacking. At the same time, she also finds it negative that the employee expresses his/her own opinion [I1,16-17]. However, when Starbucks addresses the users to inform them about the status of the ideas [IF3,19+IF4,15] she perceives this as much more positive and useful as Starbucks informs the users that the ideas are being worked on [I1,18-20]. One of the

forum threads has no comments from Starbucks and in her opinion this is negative as she assumes users who express their opinions also want responses from Starbucks. She also states that she would expect a response from Starbucks. However, she says that it is possible that Starbucks does not respond immediately but waits until many users have commented before action is taken [I1,21].

In social media, she expects Starbucks to write in a way that informs users, for example about the company and its products, which leads to a positive impression of Starbucks [I1,23]. However, her opinion is more neutral regarding Starbucks' use of communication to affect the users' actions or attitudes. She believes it is often possible to see through companies' messages and know if they are trying to change her view on certain things [I1,23-24]. She also states that all companies try to influence customers and that people should be able to think for themselves [I1,25]. Regarding Starbucks' use of communication to create discussions she thinks this is okay. Starbucks does this to create discussions and attention but maybe also to change products based on these discussions [I1,25-26].

Based on the interview and the examples shown of Starbucks' use of communication, Margit does not feel her perception of Starbucks has changed much. However, it has been affected slightly in a positive direction as Starbucks is having a dialogue in various media with the users and this is positive to her [I1,27].

12.3.2 Interview 2
The second interviewee is called Martin and is a 28-year-old student who likes Starbucks' coffee.

Social Media
Martin thinks social media is a good way for people to reach many other persons and good for companies to reach a large audience. Social media and particularly Facebook makes it easy for him to find and follow things which are interesting to him, get in touch with other persons, and participate in discussions [I2,0].

In his opinion it is okay that companies use social media, and he thinks it is a good way for them to address many people as most people have a Facebook profile [I2,2]. He believes companies use social media because of the possibility to reach a large audience and specifically be able to narrow down and identify some of the persons who are interested in the companies. Thereby, it is easier to get in touch with potential customers and perhaps direct them to the companies' websites [I2,3-4].

Identity/Image

Martin does not really believe the way a company uses social media can change his perception of the company, but he thinks that companies should be informative. However, he does emphasise that promoting or launching things is positive if he finds them interesting, and thereby the company's actions could make him consider buying things from the company [5-6].

He believes that companies to some degree shall participate in discussions but also listen to what the users want. It is okay if they participate by asking questions and joining the discussions between the users, but a balance is necessary. Companies ought to remain in the background and listen to the users' opinions, but of course the companies should also participate by arguing for their own products and causes or help the users by answering their questions. However, if companies are not taking part in the discussions he perceives the companies as less interested. He also thinks that companies' employees should avoid writing their own personal opinions but focus on the company instead [I2,7-8].

Communication

Martin believes that Starbucks' way of writing to customers in social media can affect his view of the company [I2,10]. He finds the company's way of communicating on the Facebook page positive both regarding photos and texts as the content is concerned with Starbucks. He believes it is positive that users are able to chat and discuss with other users about Starbucks and coffee [I2,12-13]. He also finds it positive that Starbucks uses its blog to write about various topics which may be interesting to some people who are also able to comment on Starbucks' posts and thereby express their opinions [I2,13-14]. In connection with the idea forum, Starbucks' way of writing is perceived as neutral, and the feedback is constructive which he believes is good as this is perceived positively by the users [I2,19-20].

He believes it is good that Starbucks informs users about various things in social media. He says people should be informed about the things they buy from Starbucks, how they are made, how employees are treated, etc., and that Starbucks should be able to listen to the users in order to know how they feel about the company and its products [I2,15]. Regarding Starbucks' use of communication to influence the users, he does not feel it has much effect on him and his perception of Starbucks as this behaviour is normal from Starbucks and other companies [I2,16]. In connection with Starbucks' attempt to create discussion he believes this is okay and that it is used to improve Starbucks. He also thinks that writing about other topics than products is positive as people for example are able to see how conditions are for employees [I2,17-18].

Based on the interview and Starbucks' use of communication, Martin's perception of Starbucks has become slightly more positive which primarily is due to the way Starbucks uses Facebook and the blog. In his opinion, there is a good division of the social media channels as the Facebook page is concerned with fun things which users talk about and discuss whereas the blog is more informative and is concerned with various topics about the company and its products [I2,18].

12.3.3 Interview 3
The third interviewee is Frank who is a 36-year-old male. He works as a sales representative and likes Starbucks' coffee.

Social Media
Frank thinks social media is very good and is getting increasing influence on everyone. He feels that companies' use of social media is positive and that communicating and advertising in social media is a natural development which will become more significant in the future [I3,0-1]. Today, most people are online in some way, and as much communication occurs online companies naturally also use social media in order to reach a large audience. He believes that if companies are not using social media they will be less visible and fall behind their competitors [I3,3].

Identity/Image
Frank believes that companies' use of communication in social media can affect his perception of them both positively and negatively depending on the content and way of addressing the users [I3,3-4]. He also thinks that companies primarily should remain in the background and observe users, but, at the same time, also actively participate when they feel it is necessary. However, he feels that the users should be the most active in the discussions, and that the amount of participation by a company depends on the topic of the discussion [I3,4-5]. If forums or chats have much activity by their users companies should be more observant whereas if there is no or limited activity he would prefer that the companies provided input to encourage more activity and discussion otherwise he would lose interest in the company and its use of social media [I3,6].

Regarding Starbucks' use of social media, he finds it positive that the company is present in different types of social media as it shows curiosity, and because it is necessary to test which channels are the best for Starbucks [I3,7-8].

Communication
Frank thinks that Starbucks' way of addressing its customers in social media can affect his perception of Starbucks. If the company's advertising does not capture his attention he is likely to become uninterested in Starbucks. However, if the company's advertising would be interesting to him, such as

by knowing more about the sourcing and production of the coffee or new products and initiatives, it would improve his perception of Starbucks [I3,8-9].

In connection with Starbucks' way of using social media, he thinks that using the Facebook page to post simple texts and photos as seen in Facebook post 1 [FB1] works well as Starbucks receives lots of responses. Regarding the blog examples, he thinks the posts contain much text but are a good way for Starbucks to inform people about various topics which users can comment on and thus create some discussion [I3,10-11]. Starbucks' communication in the posts in the forum is perceived positively as the company leaves the discussion to be between the users while remaining in the background and only commenting in a few cases when the company has an update about the status of an idea [I3,14-15].

Regarding communication in social media, he feels that Starbucks' way of writing to inform users, such as about new products and initiatives, is good to a certain extent, but too much, detailed information would be negative to him [I3,17]. Starbucks' attempt to influence the users through communication also requires a balance. Starbucks naturally wants to sell products and have many users, so he expects the company to be aggressive but also to allow the users to have their own opinions [I3,18]. In connection with Starbucks' use of communication to create discussion, he thinks that the company should initiate discussions between the users through its posts and afterwards only appear sporadically in the discussions. He also emphasises that Starbucks should ensure that the focus is on the development of the company and its products and avoid issues which are too personal [I3,19].

Based on the interview and examples of Starbucks' use of communication, Frank feels that his perception of Starbucks has become slightly more positive. He feels that the approach used in the forum is good and appeals to him, and he thinks that the use of simple questions on the Facebook page is positive as it provides Starbucks with responses from users. However, he does mention that personal opinions should be avoided [I3,20].

12.3.4 Interview 4
The fourth interviewee is Camilla who is a 23-year-old student. She likes many Starbucks products and is also present on the company's Facebook page.

Social Media
Camilla thinks social media is good to stay updated about different things and to communicate with others. She believes to some extent that companies' use of social media is positive, and it allows her to follow a company and its activities and also to comment on different things [I4,0-1]. She thinks companies use social media as it is popular among users who are active and comment on the different

types of social media. In this way it is easy for companies to reach a large audience with the companies' messages, and the companies will be better able to optimise their products [I4,1-2].

Identity/Image

Camilla is not really sure that the way companies use social media can affect her perception of them. She finds it positive that she can follow companies via social media and be updated about new things, but poor campaigns or advertisements could maybe have a negative effect on her perception [I4,3-4]. In her opinion it is positive if companies are active as it shows they are concerned with the users and target groups' interests. The companies should also show that they listen to the users' opinions about good and bad things related to Starbucks to make the company able to develop and improve itself [I4,6].

If companies are not active and participate in online discussions she feels the companies are uninterested in their customers. She thinks the companies should listen to the users and follow up on their comments to make the users aware that the companies care. She also believes that companies should use the media to express their own messages and take advantage of the possibility to receive comments from users. Companies should not only focus on advertising but also listen to the customers as the users will benefit more and also perceive the companies as more credible [I4,7-8].

She thinks it is good that Starbucks is present in various types of social media as long as the users are interested and the company is active and follow up on users' activity [I4,9].

Communication

Camilla believes that her very positive perception of Starbucks cannot be affected in a negative way by the way the company writes to its customers in social media. Her perception of Starbucks will remain positive as long as she likes the company's products [I4,10-11].

Regarding the examples of Starbucks' use of communication in social media, she has a positive impression of most of the Facebook posts. She likes that they are short and expressive, and some of the posts [FB1+FB3] bring back positive memories [I4,11-14]. The examples of the blog posts are also positive to her as she likes that Starbucks focuses on different areas of the company which anyone who is interested can read and comment on. She also emphasises that this is something other companies should consider doing, and that it is good that customers can be updated about Starbucks [I4,15-16]. In connection with the forum, she has a positive view on Starbucks' participation. She thinks Starbucks' way of commenting on the users' posts show interest in the users and therefore works well, but she does not believe that employees' personal opinions are very influential except maybe resulting in some extra comments [I4,17-19].

The fact that Starbucks has not responded to any comments in the blog is not positive to her, though she does not expect the company to be as active on the blog compared to the other social media channels. However, she says that the company does not have to reply to everyone, but she thinks it is good if Starbucks comments on users' questions. She perceives the blog as an informational page which uses one-way communication whereas the two other social media channels apply two-way communication [I4,20-22].

In social media she finds it positive that Starbucks writes to inform the users. She specifically focuses on the blog as a good tool to share information about the company and to allow people who are interested in Starbucks to know what is going on in the company [I4,22-23]. In relation to Starbucks' attempt to affect the users' behaviour or attitudes, she thinks it is okay to influence people in order to sell more products but it is not okay if the purpose is to affect their general opinions. Starbucks should more be focused on allowing the users to share their thoughts and discuss advantages and disadvantages [I4,23-24]. Regarding writing to the users to create discussion she believes this is positive as it may create debate about products and initiatives in the company which shows Starbucks the direction that users expect the company to follow. Thereby, the discussions will be beneficial to both the users and Starbucks [I4,24-26].

Based on the interview and the examples of Starbucks' use of communication, Camilla does not think that her positive image of Starbucks can be affected in a negative direction as she likes the company's products very much. She has been positively surprised by learning about Starbucks' blog and finds it good that Starbucks informs people about what takes place in the company. Learning about Starbucks' forum was also positive to her and she feels that it shows the company is constantly trying to optimise itself [I4,26-28].

12.3.5 Sub-Conclusion
After conducting the qualitative interviews with four Starbucks customers several interesting results were found.

The interviewees find social media positive for their own use as it facilitates communicating with other persons, participating in discussions, staying updated about interesting things and companies, and searching for information. Social media makes it easier for those who are interested in the companies to follow them and stay updated about their products and activities. Companies' use of social media is also perceived positively and is perceived as a natural development in how companies attempt to reach people. One interviewee also believes that companies will be less visible to customers and fall behind their competitors if they are not using social media. Social media makes it is easier for

the companies to communicate with people both in order to advertise and express their messages but also to receive input from users about improving the companies and their products.

Most of the interviewees believe that their perceptions of companies cannot be changed much by the way the companies use social media. However, they do believe that companies to some degree should participate in online discussions with the users. Primarily, the companies should stay in the background in order to observe the user discussions and listen to the users' opinions, but they should also be active sometimes, for example by helping users who have questions. The interviewees believe that if companies are active it shows credibility and interest in the users whereas being passive is perceived negatively as if the companies do not care about their users.

Regarding Starbucks' use of communication in social media, the interviewees all have positive perceptions of the Facebook page. They think that the posts are interesting and create some degree of happiness. The content in Starbucks' blog posts is perceived positively by all interviewees as they find it positive that Starbucks informs people about various topics related to the company rather than only focusing on the company's products. However, the fact that Starbucks does not reply to the users' questions and complaints is perceived negatively by some of the interviewees as they would expect Starbucks to respond to questions or negative comments from users in order to help the users and solve the problems. In connection with the forum, the interviewees mainly perceive the communication and behaviour by Starbucks positively as the discussion is left to the users while Starbucks primarily only comments when informing the users about an idea's change of status in a constructive and useful manner. However, some interviewees do not approve the personal opinions expressed by an employee.

The interviewees think that Starbucks' way of informing users is positive and some refer to the blog as very useful to the users who are interested in finding additional information about different areas related to Starbucks. One interviewee also perceives the blog as applying one-way communication whereas the Facebook page and forum are more in favour of two-way communication. The interviewees' opinions concerning Starbucks' attempt to influence and persuade the users through communication are rather neutral. Some believe that persuasion has no effect and that people are able to think for themselves, whereas others feel that a balance is needed as Starbucks is allowed to sell more products but not try to change users' general points of view. Starbucks' use of communication to create discussion is perceived positively by the interviewees as they believe it may help to improve Starbucks and its products which in the end will benefit both the company and its customers.

Generally, the interviewees do not believe their perceptions of Starbucks have changed much by the company's use of communication in social media. However, their perceptions have become slightly more positive than prior to the interviews. Some of the reasons for this are Starbucks' division of the three social media channels in order to focus on different purposes, and also Starbucks' use of social media channels that facilitate dialogue and discussions between the users which can lead to improving the company and its products. In addition, the interviewees also find it positive that Starbucks uses some of the channels to inform people about different topics regarding the company.

13. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to answer the problem statement "How does Starbucks' use of communication in social media affect the company's image as perceived by its customers?". As mentioned in section 4, this has been done by analysing Starbucks' use of communication in three social media channels, and, afterwards, interviewing few Starbucks customers in order to assess how the company's specific use of communication affects the customers' images of Starbucks.

The sub-analysis of Starbucks' use of communication in social media indicated that Starbucks applies different communication strategies which are dependent on the purpose of the specific social media channel. On Facebook Starbucks has primarily applied the persuasive strategy as the purpose seems to be to affect the users' attitudes and behaviour towards Starbucks and its products by focusing on creating emotional content in their posts which targets the users' feelings. In Starbucks' blog the informational strategy is the most dominant as Starbucks aims to inform readers through objective information. In addition, the persuasive strategy is also applied occasionally in order to improve the perception of Starbucks both among internal and external stakeholders. In Starbucks' forum the dialogue strategy has been applied to some extent as Starbucks' purpose of the forum is to collaborate with the users and thereby improve Starbucks which should benefit both the users of the forum and Starbucks in general. This collaboration process occurs through users' idea suggestions and subsequent discussions with other users about the ideas while Starbucks monitors the discussions and occasionally provides the users with updates about the ideas' status.

Based on the results of the first sub-analysis, interviews were conducted with four Starbucks customers in order to assess how their perceptions of Starbucks were influenced by the company's use of communication in social media. In general, the interviewees find social media positive as it facilitates many things, such as communicating with other people and companies, participating in discussions, and being updated about companies. Generally, companies' use of social media is perceived positively by the interviewees who think that companies to some degree should participate

in online discussions with the users but only with constructive and relevant input. If the companies actively participate in discussions the interviewees perceive this as positive as it shows that the companies are interested in the users and their opinions.

In connection with Starbucks' use of communication in the three social media channels, the interviewees all think that the content on Starbucks' Facebook page is interesting and creates a sense of happiness, and they find the use of photos and short texts well-functioning. The content in Starbucks' blog posts is perceived positively by all interviewees as it covers many different aspects of the company, but the lack of response by Starbucks to users' questions and complaints is perceived negatively. In the forum, Starbucks' use of communication with the users is perceived positively as the discussion occurs between the users while Starbucks is observant and occasionally contributes with useful informative comments.

Starbucks' use of communication to inform the users is positive and especially the blog is perceived as useful as it provides much relevant information about various aspects of the company. In connection with Starbucks' attempt to persuade the users through communication the interviewees' perceptions are mixed. Some interviewees believe it is okay to affect the users in order to sell more products while influencing the users' general opinions is wrong, whereas other interviewees do not think Starbucks' attempt to influence the users has any effect. Starbucks' use of communication to create discussions among the users is perceived positively by the interviewees who believe that the discussions may help to improve the company and thus benefit both the company and its customers.

On the basis of Starbucks' use of communication in three social media channels, the interviewees' perceptions of Starbucks have become slightly more positive than prior to the interviews. Starbucks' use of social media and the general themes which are focused on in each of the social media channels are perceived positively by the interviewees. The interviewees think that Starbucks attempts to inform people about various aspects of the company and also to create constructive dialogue and discussions between the users in a good manner which may benefit both the users and Starbucks. Overall, it appears that Starbucks' use of communication in social media is effective as it results in more positive images of Starbucks by some of the company's customers.

14. Discussion

After conducting the two sub-analyses in the thesis, the results showed that Starbucks' use of communication in social media affected the specific customers in a positive way, and that the content and writing by Starbucks was interesting, relevant and constructive to the customers. With the key

findings in mind, it is natural to consider other interesting aspects which could have been included in the thesis and thus are relevant in connection with future research.

Starbucks' use of social media is not only limited to the three channels which have been analysed in the thesis. Therefore, it is interesting to know how Starbucks communicates in other social media channels as the influence on customers' perceptions of Starbucks may be less or even more positive compared to the results found in the thesis.

Starbucks' use of communication in social media is most likely not unique, but it would be interesting to conduct a comparative analysis and assess other companies' communication efforts in social media. It may be that Starbucks is one of the best companies regarding use of online communication and user involvement and thus other companies' benchmark of how to be successful online.

Besides the things that were excluded in the thesis and thus relevant to include in future research, it is also possible to consider changes to the current use of communication by Starbucks. Perhaps it is necessary for Starbucks to assess its degree of commenting in certain situations and social media channels, in particular regarding the corporate blog, as frustrated users with unanswered questions lead to negative perceptions of Starbucks and its interest in its online users. This specific aspect was also mentioned by the interviewees who perceived Starbucks' occasional lack of response as negative.

Overall, the results from the thesis may help to show specific areas to focus on in future research, such as in connection with the users' expectations about Starbucks' degree of online activity, the content that should be posted in different social media channels, or how Starbucks specifically writes to the users. All of these considerations are important to Starbucks as they affect customers and other stakeholders' perceptions of the company, and thus directly influence Starbucks' performance and business operations. Thereby, the thesis is useful as a starting point for new, more thorough analyses which may help to develop and improve Starbucks and thus become beneficial to both the company and its users.

15. Literature List

Articles:

Clarkson, Max B. E. 1995. "A Stakeholder Framework for Analyzing and Evaluating Corporate Social Performance". *The Academy of Management Review.* Vol. 20 (1): 92-117. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/258888?uid=3737880&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21101591888583.

Donaldson, Thomas and Lee E. Preston. 1995. "The Stakeholder Theory of the Corporation: Concepts, Evidence, and Implications". The Academy of Management Review. Retrieved from: http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/258887?uid=3737880&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21101591888583.

Dutton, Jane E. and Janet M. Dukerich. 1991. "Keeping an Eye on the Mirror: Image and Identity in Organizational Adaptation". *The Academy of Management Journal.* Vol. 34 (3): 517-554. Retrieved from:http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/256405?uid=3737880&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21101592096913.

Gray, Edmund R. and John M. T. Balmer. 1998. "Managing Corporate Image and Corporate Reputation". *Long Range Planning.* Vol. 31 (5): 695–702. DOI: 10.1016/S0024-6301(98)00074-0.

Hatch, Mary J. and Majken Schultz. 1997. "Relations between organizational culture, identity and image". *European Journal of Marketing.* Vol. 31 (5): 356-365. DOI: 10.1108/eb060636.

Hatch, Mary J. and Majken Schultz. 2001. "Are the strategic stars aligned for your corporate brand?". Harvard Business Review. Vol. 79 (2): 129-134. Retrieved from: http://www.emeraldinsight.com/bibliographic_databases.htm?id=1434614&PHPSESSID=rmb0jp21j36fq1k4it0doence4.

van Riel, Cees B. M. and John M. T. Balmer. 1997. *"*Corporate Identity: the concept, its measurement and management". *European Journal of Marketing.* Vol. 31 (5): 340-355. DOI: 10.1108/eb060635.

Books:

Ankersborg, Vibeke. 2011. *Specialeprocessen.* Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Brown, Rob. 2009. *Public Relations and the Social Web: How to Use Social Media and Web 2.0 in Communications.* London: Kogan Page.

Bryman, Alan. 2004. *Social Research Methods.* 2nd edn. New York: Oxford University Press.

Brønn, Peggy S. and Roberta Wiig (Eds.). 2002. *Corporate Communication: A Strategic Approach to Building Reputation*. Oslo: Gyldendal.

Burr, Vivien. 1995. *Social Constructionism.* New York: Routledge.

Carrol, Archie B. and Ann K. Buchholtz. 2008. *Business and Society: Ethics and Stakeholder Management.* 7th edn. Mason, Ohio: South-Western Cengage Learning.

Cornelissen, Joep. 2011. *Corporate Communication – A Guide to Theory and Practice.* 3rd edn. London: Sage Publications.

de Vaus, David. 2001. *Research Design in Social Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Fombrun, Charles J. 1996. *Reputation: Realizing Value from the Corporate Image*. USA: Harvard Business School Press.

Freeman, R. Edward. 1984. *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Boston: Harpercollins College Division.

Freeman, R. Edward. 2010. *Strategic Management – A Stakeholder Approach.* 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freeman, R. Edward, Jeffrey S. Harrison, and Andrew C. Wicks. 2007. *Managing for stakeholders – Survival, Reputation, and Success.* USA: Yale University Press.

Fuglsang, Lars and Poul Bitsch Olsen (Eds.). 2004. *Videnskabsteori – På tværs af fagkulturer og paradigmer".* Frederiksberg: Roskilde Universitetsforslag.

Harboe, Thomas.. 2011. *Method and Project Writing – an Introduction.* Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Kvale, Steinar. 2007. *Doing Interviews.* London: Sage Publications.

Postman, Joel. 2009. *SocialCorp: Social Media goes Corporate*. Berkeley: New Riders.

Safko, Lon. 2012. *The Social Media Bible.* New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

Schultz, Majken, Mary J. Hatch and Mogens H. Larsen (Eds.) 2000. *The Expressive Organization: Linking Identity, Reputation, and the Corporate Brand*. New York: Oxford University Press.

van Riel, Cees B. M. 1995. *Principles of Corporate Communication.* London: Prentice Hall.

van Riel, Cees B. M. and Charles J. Fombrun. 2007. *Essentials of Corporate Communication.* London: Routledge.

Wenneberg, Søren. 2002. *Socialkonstruktivisme – positioner, problemer og perspektiver.* 2nd edn. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Websites:

Customeru. 2008. "What IS the Starbucks Customer Experience?" Accessed October 5, 2012. https://customeru.wordpress.com/2008/02/07/what-is-the-starbucks-customer-experience/.

Headstream. 2012. "Social Brands 100". Accessed December 2, 2012. http://www.socialbrands100.com/.

Starbucks. 2008. "Starbucks Announces Strategic Initiatives to Increase Shareholder Value; Chairman Howard Schultz Returns as CEO". Accessed October 5, 2012. http://news.starbucks.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=77.

Starbucks. 2012a. "Starbucks Company Profile". Accessed October 5, 2012. http://globalassets.starbucks.com/assets/9a6616b98dc64271ac8c910fbee47884.pdf.

Starbucks. 2012b. "MyStarbucksIdea - FAQ". Accessed October 5, 2012. http://mystarbucksidea.force.com/ideafaq.

The Guardian. 2008. "Starbucks lets customers have their say". Accessed December 28, 2012. http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/mar/24/netbytes.starbucks.

16. Appendix

16.1 Appendix 1 – Mission Statement

Our Starbucks Mission Statement

Our mission: to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time.

Here are the principles of how we live that every day:

Our Coffee

It has always been, and will always be, about quality. We're passionate about ethically sourcing the finest coffee beans, roasting them with great care, and improving the lives of people who grow them. We care deeply about all of this; our work is never done.

Our Partners

We're called partners, because it's not just a job, it's our passion. Together, we embrace diversity to create a place where each of us can be ourselves. We always treat each other with respect and dignity. And we hold each other to that standard.

Our Customers

When we are fully engaged, we connect with, laugh with, and uplift the lives of our customers – even if just for a few moments. Sure, it starts with the promise of a perfectly made beverage, but our work goes far beyond that. It's really about human connection.

Our Stores

When our customers feel this sense of belonging, our stores become a haven, a break from the worries outside, a place where you can meet with friends. It's about enjoyment at the speed of life – sometimes slow and savored, sometimes faster. Always full of humanity.

Our Neighborhood

Every store is part of a community, and we take our responsibility to be good neighbors seriously. We want to be invited in wherever we do business. We can be a force for positive action – bringing together our partners, customers,

and the community to contribute every day. Now we see that our responsibility – and our potential for good – is even larger. The world is looking to Starbucks to set the new standard, yet again. We will lead.

Our Shareholders

We know that as we deliver in each of these areas, we enjoy the kind of success that rewards our shareholders. We are fully accountable to get each of these elements right so that Starbucks – and everyone it touches – can endure and thrive.

About Us . Our Company . Our Starbucks Mission Statement

Starbucks updated their cover photo.
11 July

Have you tried the new #StarbucksRefreshers yet?

Like · Comment · Share   5,033   347   146

5,033 people like this.

Priscila Levinson ♥
12 July 2012 at 00:10 · Like · 2

Erica Carpenter LOVE IT!!
12 July 2012 at 00:10 · Like · 1

Amber McKinley That actually hurts my eyes...
12 July 2012 at 00:10 · Like · 10

Juan Mendoza passion tea lemonade!!!!!!
12 July 2012 at 00:10 · Like · 6

Ramon Fagundes I LIKE
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Justina Estrella NO. cool lime is better 😊
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 4

Marco Miranda Estefania Rodriguez Martinez
See Translation
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Christopher Nickel yeah 😊
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Marie Jäckels REFRESHAAAAAAAA
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Mohamed Achraf awesome !!
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Monica Kramer best.drink.ever
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 2

Crystal Chang ptl, my fave!!
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

James Blunt Access All ═②CURTA ◄───
↑curta↑
↑curta↑
↑curta↑
↑curta↑
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Miguel Angel Mendo Reyes i need one noww!!!
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

David Alejandro Córdova Rivera So thirsty...
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Francisco Javier Cornejo Garcia Quiero !!!
See Translation
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Chicas lindas everywhere Si eres una chica linda únete, ya se que lo eres a mi no me engañas XD ♥ ♥ ♥
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 1

Brandon Paul The refresher is sooooo gross. Starbucks really disappointed me with this one 😊
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 3

Alejandro Bello greaaat 20 bucks water
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Nora Guillen Bunin FREE DRINKS ON FRIDAY!!!! NOON - 3PM
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Shiva Prabhushankar sexy.
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Ana Carolina Jara i love that drink*-*
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Jason Fonseca cant wait till friday!
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Galia Bojorquez Acevedo Loveee<3
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like

Julia Bolssen love that drink
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 1

Sheridan Samaco Yes Passion tea....bottoms up!
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 2

Kennedy Sofly Drake look diffrent but still good
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 1

Helen Merideth Galiszewski The lime Refresher tastes better than the hibiscus
12 July 2012 at 00:11 · Like · 1

Luis Mendez ALL HAIL COFFEE
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Rosalyn Su R En todos los lugares
See Translation
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Brittany Slaughter ♥ it 😊
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Kindra Franzen We had a sample of that today and we gave it back. It's over priced and DISGUSTING!
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like · 1

Alicia Fleming its a verry berry refresher
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like · 1

Rosie Kirschenbaum u artsy af starbucks
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like · 3

Karen Grant Thomson what's that bright light in the top right corner? I seem to recall it from many summers ago
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like · 1

Oana Domnita Not happening in Basel with 15C!
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Gabriel Gaburierou Zepeda Cazares watashi wa Starbucks sukidesu!
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Jimmy Lam We want to see the Drink more, I don't care much for the sun...
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Luisito Deza De La Cruz so delicious!!! I wanna a frapuccino 😊
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Danns Muñoz im just!! I ♥ starbucks my heart belongs there
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like · 1

Haluk Bilenbilir Stlegal Tesla kanka yabanci subesi buda burdada buluruz birini 😊
See Translation
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Erin Arnone i had that yesterday when they came out. cool lime tastes better though
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Howard Optional Thingy PTL! ♥
12 July 2012 at 00:12 · Like

Charity Willard Sturgeon I had a sample of this today it was yummy! I'm actually thinking about going and getting one this afternoon!
12 July 2012 at 00:13 · Like · 2

Sandra Marshall yummm
12 July 2012 at 00:13 · Like

Bri Gutierrez frapuccino te amoo! ♥
12 July 2012 at 00:13 · Like · 1

Naomi Armenta Passion Tea….love it!
12 July 2012 at 00:13 · Like

James Campbell Probably will taste better when not held to the sun until warm…
12 July 2012 at 00:13 · Like

Morgan Wilson sunshine in a cup 🙂
12 July 2012 at 00:13 · Like

Leo Thomas no maybe tomorrow 😐
12 July 2012 at 00:14 · Like

Barbara Mossburg I can' believe what I heard!!! Starbucks would not send coffee over to our troops because they don't believe in us being over there. I am boycotting them from now on!!! And so should anyone who supports our troops!!!
12 July 2012 at 00:19 · Like · 👍 1

Addy Laine Rossiter @Dale Klein there is no sugar in it, everything is natural. although it has a natural sugar substitute; stevia. in a grande there is 60 mg of caffeine, as compared to the 75mg in an espresso shot. In the trenta size the berry hibiscus contains 120 calories, and the lime, 100 calories.
12 July 2012 at 00:20 · Like

Wuilmer Rodriguez no tenk you
12 July 2012 at 00:20 · Like

Violet Bassett-Mathy Just tried a Refresher today. I love both flavors!
12 July 2012 at 00:21 · Like

Kids Communicate yum!
12 July 2012 at 00:22 · Like

Val Pirc I wish, but you aren t open in Croatia
12 July 2012 at 00:22 · Like

Mar Mariana M shaken lemon passion tea 😀
12 July 2012 at 00:22 · Like

Max Marjoram That looks PENG
12 July 2012 at 00:23 · Like

Lexi Ramsay Griffith Love starbucks
12 July 2012 at 00:23 · Like

Jack Cook SUPPORT ARE TROOPS !!!
12 July 2012 at 00:25 · Like

Jonathan Hobson Have you tried paying your taxes?
21 October 2012 at 22:17 · Like · 👍 1

Abby Nesheim not a fan of either. 😐 and i was really hoping to like them.
6 November 2012 at 17:24 · Like

Ariel Singh yep
9 November 2012 at 15:41 · Like

Mohamad Abou Al Kheir aboud ya aboud
13 November 2012 at 15:35 · Like

Garen Canoglu I love you white choclate mocha 😀
21 November 2012 at 21:03 · Like

Neil Lees Have you paid your taxes yet?
2 December 2012 at 21:44 · Like

Luigi Parletti Have you tried to pay your taxes? Oh wait….
27 December 2012 at 20:44 · Like

Starbucks
15 August

What makes you happy? http://sbux.co/OxooFO
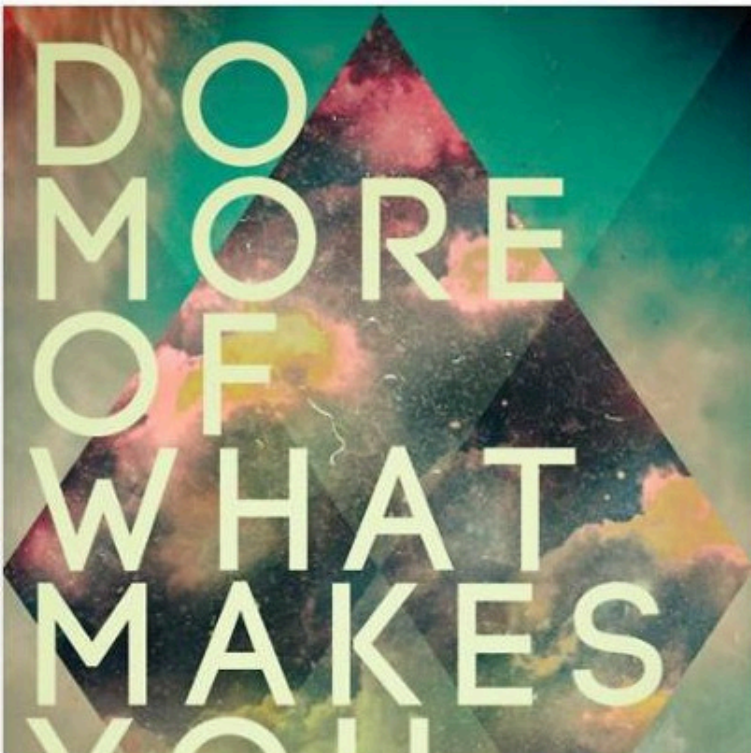
Like · Comment · Share   100,537   2,139   30,759

Heather Lee Supporting our military!
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 1

Soufiane Tanale Tumblr stuff, right?
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like

Ronnie Finley coffee.
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 1

Michelle Kiel God makes me happy!
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 8

Yuv Luvs Ya so i can cut out my hw YES!!
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like

Brittany Stubenrauch A mocha cookie crumble frappucino..
That's what makes me happy! 😊 ❤
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 4

Kasey Makal I want to frame this and put it in my room. asldjfh.
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 1

Jessyca Kirkman YOU MAKE ME HAPPY STARBUCKS!
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 1

Sofia Ramos Cordero Dance and dream
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 1

Heather Brumfield more, cheaper, lower calorie starbucks.
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 5

Erwin Delledizzle fudgeee this is so hipster
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 2

Orlando Orla Godinez Martinez Music♥
16 August 2012 at 00:07 · Like · 4

Gina Schilling What would make me happy is for you guys
support out troops...
16 August 2012 at 04:35 · Like

Julie Wray Do what makes me happy? If I could work for myself
and to help make a difference. I have yet to figure that out...
16 August 2012 at 04:37 via mobile · Like

Michael Cohee Well said...
16 August 2012 at 04:37 · Like

Eva Moreno Drawing, Art,and of course Coffee.
16 August 2012 at 04:37 · Like

Melania Cruz what makes me happy is to take my hot chocolate
coffee and my bread muffin mc
16 August 2012 at 04:38 · Like · 1

Starbucks Hi Rusty Rad, Angie Fitzpatrick-Whitesell & Bruce
Morris, Please do not believe the false rumor that has been floating
around on Facebook. This is an old rumor that began in 2004 and has
been debunked by several credible organizations. Unfortunately, it still
resurfaces from time to time. We absolutely do support the troops.
For more information please visit: http://news.starbucks.com
/about+starbucks/myths+facts/militarydonations.htm Thank you.

**Starbucks Newsroom: Starbucks Support
of the Troops/Military [Updated May 2012]**
news.starbucks.com
troops, starbucks

16 August 2012 at 04:39 · Like

Starbucks
26 September

One more round.

Like · Comment · Share   100,832   2,462   2,247

Pascal Winistörfer awesome!
26 September 2012 at 18:01 · Like

Michael Yamin
26 September 2012 at 18:01 · Like

Louis Frank Hardaker Lol
26 September 2012 at 18:01 via mobile · Like

Allie Tatum <333333333
26 September 2012 at 18:01 · Like

Tintillier Alison Aah c'est mon prénom 🙂
See Translation
26 September 2012 at 18:01 via mobile · Like · 1

Rene Moreno vanilla bean my drink of choice
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Dima Elektronika nice 🙂
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Roel Bacungan Sobrepeña hindi na naulit…gusto kung maulit
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Federica Russo ♥
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Rodrigo Kenji wow nice shot!
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Honza Smělík Vypadá jak z černobylu 🙂
See Translation
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Victor Moreira Abarzúa Allison Inostroza ejejjeje xD
See Translation
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Luke Chamberlain Counterpoint?
26 September 2012 at 18:02 via mobile · Like

Henriques Gaspar Viana Kcbanny Ya
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Manuel Leon WISH I HAD A HOT COFFEE RIGHT NOW
26 September 2012 at 18:02 · Like

Jiarong Cheong the first person I thought of was Taylor Swift
♥
26 September 2012 at 18:03 · Like

Frank Audia Jr. It's hard to get the first round in Fairmont, WV.
We need one of your stores here before we can even do that.
26 September 2012 at 18:03 · Like · 2

Memento Mori sooo did you guys stop drawing little ethnic faces
on cups and actually put names on them now?? 😕
26 September 2012 at 18:03 · Like

Paola A. Cat Alisson pedi pra postarem seu nome, mas vc sabe
que eles não sabem escrever direito né? HAHAHAHA ♥
See Translation
26 September 2012 at 18:03 · Like · 1

Jelena Bozic starbucks serbia!!!
26 September 2012 at 18:03 · Like

Nicole R Schultz pumpkin spice latte.
26 September 2012 at 18:03 · Like

Rafal Blautenberg software focus.. for those who are too dumb
to use focus in their camera.
26 September 2012 at 18:03 · Like

Alison McMenamy thats me!…no…no its not lol
26 September 2012 at 18:04 · Like

Christian YDoni B Photoshop Fail!!! XD
26 September 2012 at 18:04 · Like · 2

Gabrielle Porto Kossowski Hipster!
26 September 2012 at 18:04 · Like

Marco Gemelli Coney island ?
26 September 2012 at 18:04 · Like

Alison Ohmen I'm alison :))
26 September 2012 at 18:04 · Like · 3

Sarah Snow i had a pumpkin spice latte yesterday ♥
26 September 2012 at 18:04 · Like · 1

Magsino Taray Queen !
26 September 2012 at 18:04 · Like

Aimee Buxton I'm pretty sure its an instagram--so no photoshop
needed.
26 September 2012 at 18:05 · Like

Dorothy Movaghar The hulk! Try it.
26 September 2012 at 18:05 · Like

Hanan Qurban Al-Turkistany Am dying for pumpkin spice latte
26 September 2012 at 18:05 · Like

Gayle Whitmer Bonato how apropos, Allison Ardeth Bonato but
they forgot one of your 'L's'
26 September 2012 at 18:06 · Edited · Like · 1

Allison Barbara Gonsalves 😃 😃 😃 love starbucks....it should start in India real soon 😊
26 September 2012 at 18:05 · Like

Allison Conetah Hay thts my name but w 1 L missing
26 September 2012 at 18:05 via mobile · Like · 👍 1

Susan Barairo Rizal ❤ capuchino vanilla
26 September 2012 at 18:05 · Like

Magsino Taray Queen L0lz!
26 September 2012 at 18:05 · Like

Kevin Still If I worked at starbucks I would purposely spell people's names wrong so it would screw up their instagrams.
26 September 2012 at 18:06 · Edited · Like · 👍 2

Alison Yeats Marianna Angulo 😦 that's scary, same spelling of name, and it does like kinda like my handwriting!
26 September 2012 at 18:06 · Like · 👍 1

Allie Preissler That's my name!
26 September 2012 at 18:06 via mobile · Like

Kennedy Rice I literally just finished a pumpkin spice latte. 😃
26 September 2012 at 18:06 via mobile · Like

Andrea Howell Chouhan Are you shipping pumpkin spice to your stores in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia?
26 September 2012 at 18:06 via mobile · Like

Jacqueline Hobbs Counting down till redcups!!!!!
26 September 2012 at 18:07 · Like

Joslyn Feldmann I see all the cups with names, even know people who have had them. All the times I have been to starbucks not once has anyone put my name on my cup or something cute. 😦
26 September 2012 at 18:07 · Like

Magsino Taray Queen G0od sh0ot!!
26 September 2012 at 18:07 · Like · 👍 1

Toni Murro Borden How about baking one more round of Pumpkin scones so your not out of them by 9am everyday?
26 September 2012 at 18:08 via mobile · Like · 👍 1

Mee Yop Kim Yey, sounds good...
26 September 2012 at 18:08 · Like

Hà Nguyễn Thu Trang Nguyen t sẽ mở chi nhánh hà nội
See Translation
26 September 2012 at 18:08 · Like

Sharee Monestine Yum love Starbucks!!! Caramel Mociotto! *spelling*
26 September 2012 at 18:08 via mobile · Like

Virginia Gonzalez Chai Tea 7 pumps no water
26 September 2012 at 18:08 · Like

Muhammad Sharjeel Khilji plz launch Starbucks in Sweden 😊
26 September 2012 at 18:08 · Like

Dyan Pauline Aguirre cute!
26 September 2012 at 18:08 · Like

Mohammed Jabbar Waheeb i miss so much starbucks
26 September 2012 at 18:08 · Like · 👍 1

Karl Gillum did you know they screw our troops
27 September 2012 at 03:54 · Like · 👍 1

Alison Cutknife this one has MY name on it!! ❤
27 September 2012 at 03:55 · Like

Jennifer Barrer like the cup an the ferris wheel too
27 September 2012 at 03:56 · Like

Bushra Aijaz Ahmed Addicted to SB love it love it love it love it hazelnut latte the best hmmmmm the smell ahhhhh .
27 September 2012 at 03:58 via mobile · Like

Robert Wayne Urmos Caffeinated Goodness...
27 September 2012 at 03:59 · Like

Starbucks Hello Karl Gillum,
Please do not believe this old rumor that has resurfaced on Facebook recently. It is not true. We absolutely do support the troops! If you would like to read more about the origins of this rumor and find out how Starbucks supports the troops, please visit: http://news.starbucks.com/about+starbucks/myths+facts/militarydonations.htm Thank you!

> **Starbucks Newsroom: Starbucks Support of the Troops/Military [Updated May 2012]**
> news.starbucks.com
> troops, starbucks

27 September 2012 at 04:01 · Like · 👍 2

Jana Pink ,pumpkin spice latte,yes,yes,yeeeeessssss.
27 September 2012 at 04:03 · Like

William Hopkins check snopes.com as well for the full story @karl Gillum

Trideep Kumar Das nice
15 October 2012 at 18:53 · Like

Graham Howard Mine's a tax payment
16 October 2012 at 19:29 · Like · 👍 3

Martin Hooper paeasites
17 October 2012 at 00:07 · Like

Sheryl Powers We need a starbucks here in ada,okla
19 October 2012 at 02:56 · Like

Fereshteh Mohammadi Funy and nice
21 October 2012 at 15:37 · Like

Alison Ross hey it has my name on lhe cup
6 November 2012 at 22:26 · Like · 👍 1

Stars Die Pay your UK corporation tax and stop robbing the British public blind.
13 November 2012 at 15:41 · Like

Patricia Parcell man, i am dying for a frappe
24 November 2012 at 20:38 · Like

Ed Lawson Nice pic. Now pay some tax
21 December 2012 at 20:34 · Like

Martina Scollo Abeti Starbucks come in Italy please!*-* I want you!*0*
22 December 2012 at 12:26 · Like

Starbucks
29 September

Today and every day! #NationalCoffeeDay

BEST. DAY. EVER!

Like · Comment · Share

81,456   804   4,066

Yakup İlker Temel .
29 September 2012 at 18:42 · Like

Stephanie O'Brien so...free Starbucks day? 😊
29 September 2012 at 18:42 · Like · 10

Öykü İnanç Sena Conkoğlu bugün kahve günüymüş ❤️
See Translation
29 September 2012 at 18:42 · Like

Orian Lee Sedlow No amount of coffee will bring back the Ponds! IT IS A LIE!
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like · 1

Felix Ouk Starbucks should be giving something out for free today!
29 September 2012 at 19:21 via mobile · Edited · Like · 16

Abdilahi Bade I love Starbucks.
29 September 2012 at 18:43 via mobile · Like · 1

Betty Marrow I know we will get a tick from Andrew when he sees this lol ...
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like

Terri Gann what!!!! no promos????
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like · 2

WarMachine Isaac Estúpidos Hipsters.
See Translation
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like

Netti Süveges every day ❤️
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like

Sung Jin Kim 커피 좋구나 ㅋ
See Translation
29 September 2012 at 18:43 via mobile · Like

Rusu Marian :X
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like

Kerri Mckay Lehto Love it! Especially my starbucks:)
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like

Megan Smith Hell yeah! Got my Carmel frap!! 😊
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like

Jon-Curtis Lynch Veto ..might as well drink the tears of some Colombian farmer haha
29 September 2012 at 18:43 · Like · 2

Cele Lince How will be the celebration of this importan day in México?
29 September 2012 at 18:44 via mobile · Like

Mikayla Painter See Misty Martin 😠
29 September 2012 at 18:44 · Like

Maria Del Rosario Leon yeaaaaaaaaah 😃
29 September 2012 at 18:44 · Like

Nicholas Fischer hmm...why did I have to pay for my starbucks ice coffee today then? lol
29 September 2012 at 18:44 · Like · 2

Joel Wong It's also my birthday! What a coincidence!
29 September 2012 at 18:44 · Like · 4

Gina Valerio Every single day in my house 😊
29 September 2012 at 18:44 · Like · 1

Khalid Y-usa Whassap?
29 September 2012 at 18:44 · Like

Dodie Starbuck ME
29 September 2012 at 18:45 · Like

Morgan Roebuck Maybe for the weasel Howard Schultz
29 September 2012 at 18:45 · Like · 1

Hujin Tao you lie horribly. Sorry starbucks but this is the first post I rlly dislike. No day is best in my life. shaddup
29 September 2012 at 18:45 · Like

Laverta Williams Are They giving away free coffee???
29 September 2012 at 18:45 via mobile · Like · 2

Brenda Parsons Yes.
29 September 2012 at 18:45 · Like

Ben Smith My day is only complete with coffee!
29 September 2012 at 18:46 via mobile · Like · 2

Moyad S. AlShaikh Big like
29 September 2012 at 18:46 · Like · 1

Jeremy Corless Why is it that every other coffee shop in this town is having an awesome promotion today and Starbucks the biggest and best coffee show isn't doing anything!!! It's an official day yet you do nothing for all your customers that spend hundreds of dollars a year to support your organization??? Disappointed!!! Shame on you Starbucks!!!!
29 September 2012 at 18:46 via mobile · Like · 7

Martin Moon Wood ⭐ That would be every day for the last 10 years that you paid no tax in the UK right?
16 October 2012 at 11:12 · Like · 4

John Fullwood What no taxes paid in the UK AGAIN. Do not buy any coffee from a company that avoids it's taxes.
16 October 2012 at 19:54 · Like · 4

Mark Jordan Is this the National Tax Avoidence day?
16 October 2012 at 20:38 · Like · 4

Joe Cottrell-Boyce http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19967397

Starbucks 'paid just £8.6m tax'
www.bbc.co.uk
US coffee giant Starbucks reportedly paid just £8.6m in corporation tax in the UK over 14 years and nothing in the last three years.

16 October 2012 at 22:14 · Like · 3

Chet London http://www.facebook.com/BoycottStarbucks?fref=ts
16 October 2012 at 23:45 · Like

Michael Watts tax return day is always the best for starbucks
16 October 2012 at 23:48 · Like · 2

Lee Elliott when u pay tax
17 October 2012 at 03:33 · Like · 1

Lorraine Groves Best ever day for what? Avoiding UK tax? Bad Starbucks!!!
17 October 2012 at 15:27 · Like · 3

Graham Howard I paid my taxes
17 October 2012 at 18:49 · Like · 1

16.3 Appendix 3 – Screenshots from Starbucks' Corporate Blog

Corporate Blog Post 1 - Bursting with Blueberries [CB1]:

http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bursting-with-blueberries/1209

Bursting with Blueberries | Starbucks Coffee Company   http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bursting-with-blueberries/1209

Bursting with Blueberries
Tuesday, July 03, 2012
Posted by Erin V. - Food Marketing project manager

Find Us Online

As a kid, I always tried to sneak in extra ingredients while baking: chocolate chips in the cookies and blueberries in the blueberry muffins. I figured if it was a yummy ingredient the more the better, which makes our new Bountiful Blueberry Muffin a deliciously tasty idea.

Of course my technique did have some pitfalls, namely unstirrable batters and exploding muffins in the oven. Thankfully our master muffin baker was better prepared to take on the challenge of packing our muffin full of blueberries.

After many batches and a fancy, new blueberry depositor (a super-technical bakery tool that has an extra wide nozzle to distribute blueberries throughout the batter), our new muffin now has 20% more blueberries which we think is even more delicious! Have you tried it yet? Tell us what you think!

Menu   Food   Starbucks

comments (3)   Comment FAQ

sandraboody@gmail.com Tasty as promised ..a real home made treat!
11/12/2012 12:28 PM

                    Reply   Flagged   Permalink

suxxard   These, and the raisin bran muffins are the most

Bursting with Blueberries | Starbucks Coffee Company   http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bursting-with-blueberries/1209

| 11/17/2012 11:11 PM
arthurcalig1 | popular at the store I work at.
love them berries... perfect treat!
Pretty tasty too. |
| 11/23/2012 4:14 PM | |

Reply   Flagged   Permalink
Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Leave a Comment

You must be signed in to comment.

Don't have a Starbucks account? Create an account now.

Username *

Password *

Forgot your username or password?

Sign In

Corporate Blog Post 2 – Helping Sumatran Farmers Respond to Climate Change [CB2]:
http://www.starbucks.com/blog/helping-sumatran-farmers-respond-to-climate-change/1213

Helping Sumatran Farmers Respond to Climate Change | Starbucks...   http://www.starbucks.com/blog/helping-sumatran-farmers-resp...

Helping Sumatran Farmers Respond to Climate Change

Monday, July 23, 2012
Posted by Ann B. - Global Responsibility manager

The effects of climate change are far-reaching, and farmers around the world are especially sensitive to the impact. Traditional farming strategies may not yield the same results, and farmers now contend with an increasing number of variables that can affect coffee production.

Conservation International's Sumatra program manager Fazrin Rahmadani is witnessing this firsthand. "In the past, a stable climate in Sumatra minimized instances of pests and diseases, helped regulate the rainy season and made it easier to predict fertilization periods for coffee," writes Rahmadani. Today, unexpected changes question tried and true farming methods and introduce new challenges. The coffee berry borer *(Hypothenemus hampei)*, for instance, has begun "expanding to higher altitudes and posing a growing threat to coffee crops."

With the help of our partners at Conservation International, it's our goal to help farmers address these challenges as they arise through our C.A.F.E. Practices program. Helping farmers thrive in the midst of a changing climate is fundamental to our mission statement, and helps to secure the future of the thing we are most passionate about: incredible coffee.

Read Rahmadani's full blog entry here to learn how Starbucks and Conservation International are working together on a pilot approach to helping farmers respond to the effects of climate change without sacrificing the principles of high-quality, climate-friendly coffee production.

Find Us Online

facebook

You Tube

my STARBUCKS IDEA

1 of 3   22-12-2012 20:30

90

Helping Sumatran Farmers Respond to Climate Change | Starbucks...   http://www.starbucks.com/blog/helping-sumatran-farmers-resp...

Responsibility   Ethical Sourcing   Starbucks

comments (3)   **Comment FAQ**

freeman1962   Climate change; unspecified "changes"; unspecified
11/15/2012 9:54 AM   "challenges". Does anyone else smell Agenda 21?

*I accept the Starbucks Terms and Conditions for
posting insofar as they do not prejudice my rights and
withhold consent to any terms or conditions which do
not depend on exercise of government powers in
violation of my sovereign rights, including but not
limited to violations or the Supreme law of the United
States of America.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

freeman1962   In reply to: freeman1962
11/15/2012 9:58 AM
Erratum referencing previous post: for "do not
depend" replace with "depend".
Sorry... I was distracted. :)

*I accept the Starbucks Terms and Conditions for
posting insofar as they do not prejudice my
rights and withhold consent to any terms or
conditions which depend on exercise of
government powers in violation of my sovereign
rights, including but not limited to violations of
the Supreme law of the United States of
America.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

astavisky   What ever happened to moving to where the weather
12/3/2012 5:24 PM   is more favorable? That's what our ancestors did 10's
of thousands of years ago. Seemed to work out ok.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Corporate Blog Post 3 – Message from Howard: Looking Back to Look Forward [CB3]:
http://www.starbucks.com/blog/message-from-howard-looking-back-to-look-forward-/1216

Message from Howard: Looking Back to Look Forward | Starbucks ...   http://www.starbucks.com/blog/message-from-howard-looking-...

Message from Howard: Looking Back to Look Forward

Tuesday, September 04, 2012
Posted by Howard S., Starbucks chairman, president and chief executive officer

Find Us Online

facebook

You Tube

my STARBUCKS IDEA

Dear Partners,

Over the last few weeks some of my peers have reminded me that Tuesday, September 4, marks my 30th year with Starbucks Coffee Company. I've been asked if Starbucks should celebrate this milestone in some way, and while I do not think that's necessary, I do see this moment as an opportunity to reach out to you, my partners at Starbucks, and say thank you. I am well aware that I wouldn't be here today if it was not for all that you, and those who came before all of us, accomplished.

I was only 29 when I walked into the roasting plant on Airport Way (which also served as the company's office) on my first day at Starbucks in 1982. I was in awe of the passion and commitment of the small group of people building the foundation of the Starbucks we know today. At the time, there were only four stores selling whole bean coffee, tea, and spices, and everyone was getting ready to open store number five, with a few wondering if they were being too ambitious.

Then as now, the company was driven by uncompromising standards of quality and a set of guiding principles that we were determined to maintain, values that have stayed intact, serving us well for 40-plus years.

Although we often track Starbucks history by store count, there are other milestones along our journey that really speak to our evolution as a company, and to who we are at our core. As you know, we became one of the few companies in America to provide comprehensive health care and stock options (Bean Stock) to all of our employees, including part-time workers, making us "partners" because our success was truly shared. Yet I don't know if, back then, anyone honestly imagined the magnitude of people this would so positively affect. Thus far in 2012 alone, Starbucks partners have benefited by a record total of more than $200 million in realized gains from Bean Stock—another milestone that is truly among the most gratifying of my

1 of 4   26-12-2012 15:24

career.

As I write this letter to you, I can feel the emotion welling up inside of me as I am reminded of just what it's taken for us to achieve the position that Starbucks has in the world. Over the years we've been through a lot, celebrations as well as challenges, and for a time nothing short of a crucible, when our very existence was threatened. These more painful milestones are humbling, but make me no less proud because we learned from our errors and worked together to find a way forward.

Whenever we question ourselves, or others question us, we dig deep inside our hearts and minds for answers, ultimately embracing three things that have long defined who we are, and what we stand for: the quality of our people, the quality of our coffee, and our responsibility to the communities we serve. Proof of our resurgence always comes in the exceptional experience we create in our stores, and the unsurpassed quality and consistency of what is in the cup. Those measures of our success are as true today as they were when Pike Place first opened in 1971. When we stay true to our values, pride and growth follow.

Many people ask me what I think Starbucks will look like 10 to 20 years, and I tell them without doubt that Starbucks will ALWAYS be a coffee company, committed to ethically sourcing and roasting the finest arabica coffees in the world. But I also know, because history tells me so, that there will be degrees of success that we cannot even imagine today, triumphs that will come about because we continue to maintain our entrepreneurial DNA.

It's been said that "the best way to create the future is to invent it," which is why we must continue to push for innovations that reflect and support our core values. Coffee, tea, food, juice, partner benefits, health and wellness, digital and social media, mobile commerce, serving and speaking up for our communities—these are just some of the areas where we will continue to concentrate our energies. And just as we have entered new countries, at times amid skepticism, we will continue to welcome new businesses into ours via strategic acquisitions that will provide synergies as well as new opportunities. And, yes, there will be some mistakes. But there will never be a day when we look to the future without looking back on the heritage that built one of the most recognized and respected brands in the world.

When I ask myself if we are overreaching, I go back to this notion: coffee is our core, but Starbucks has always been about so much more. We have the responsibility as well as the authority to keep that tradition alive, to build a company with a conscience, always attempting to make decisions through the lens of humanity. I am unbelievably proud that we remain committed to living up to a promise that I made three decades ago, trying every day to

achieve the fragile balance between profitability and benevolence. We do not always succeed to the degree we all wish, but we will never abandon the effort.

I send you this letter not to celebrate an individual milestone. I send you this letter to share that milestone with you, honoring all that we have accomplished together. You, and those who came before us, have already made history. Yet we are far from finished. I promise you, unequivocally, that the best is yet to come. Ours is not an easy task, our success is not an entitlement. We must and will earn it every day if we put our customers at the center of all that we do and if we lead with empathy for our fellow partners, because when we exceed each others' expectations we will exceed the expectations of our customers.

As we close out yet another fiscal year, I have such high hopes for the next, highlighted by this holiday season. It will take our collective efforts to continue to achieve the greatness that Starbucks has experienced in the past—and, in turn, for all of us to achieve the dreams we have for ourselves and for our families. I urge you to keep believing in your own dreams, and please, do not let anyone tell you they cannot come true.

Thank you for allowing me to pursue my dreams, and for creating a company that we all can be proud to call our own.

With great respect and admiration,

Howard

Howard

comments (0)   **Comment FAQ**

Leave a Comment

You must be signed in to comment.
Don't have a Starbucks account? **Create an account now.**

Username *

Password *

Forgot your **username** or **password?**

Corporate Blog Post 4 – Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) [CB4]:
http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and-tastier-/1231

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier)

Monday, September 17, 2012
Posted by Matthew G - Global Brand Loyalty director

Find Us Online

Over the past two years, we've been honored to serve more than 4.8 million active members in the My Starbucks Rewards™ program in the United States and Canada and are thankful for their continued loyalty. Since the launch of My Starbucks Rewards™, we've been carefully listening to customers and have harnessed feedback from MyStarbucksIdea, Twitter, Facebook and direct conversations to further evolve our program. I'm pleased to let you know about some program enhancements that will be coming soon to the United States and Canada, starting on Oct. 16.

Let's look at the new benefits:

Earn Free Drinks (And Now Food) Faster

Whether you're a member at the Welcome or Green level enjoying your favorite birthday drink, or a Gold level member earning your "Sweet 15," the great feeling of getting a free drink is about to get sweeter. Starting on Oct. 16, Gold members will earn a free reward every 12 transactions instead of every 15 and now you'll be able to redeem that free reward for a free drink or any food item. The new "Free Food" benefit applies to nearly all food, including muffins, scones, oatmeal, pastries, breakfast sandwiches and snacks of all sorts are all included. But so are bistro boxes, wraps and paninis. We are excited to be able to give our customers this flexibility in their rewards.

We believe that by adding food items and by providing the ability to earn free rewards faster is a benefit that is valuable to our customers, based on their feedback to us.

Rewards Loaded Digitally

One of the most popular requests on MyStarbucksIdea is to offer digital rewards instead of paper postcards. Beginning Oct. 16, members will receive an email notifying them when a free reward has been loaded directly onto their Starbucks Card. Please make sure that we have your most current email

address.

After that, it's a simple process:
1. Visit any participating company-operated store
2. Tell the barista you have a free reward that you want to use (that way you get to choose when you redeem your reward)
3. Present your registered Starbucks Card (or scan your registered Card on the Starbucks Card mobile app).

And voila, your drink or food item on your ticket will be free.

Next, a few benefits that are going away:

To add these benefits, as well as to continue to invest in future innovations, we are saying goodbye to a few benefits. Beginning on Oct. 16, we will no longer offer free syrups and soy, or a free tall beverage with a whole bean purchase.

While more members will receive more value overall with the new program, we know losing certain benefits will be disappointing to some customers. The benefit of this new structure gives members the ability to earn rewards 20 percent faster and provides more choices in their rewards.

Finally, what's staying the same:

We are keeping many of the benefits our customers have appreciated – including a free birthday beverage (or a free food item), free refills for coffee and tea and a personalized Gold card for our Gold members.

Please continue to provide your feedback to us on MyStarbucksIdea.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

Matthew G
director, Global Brand Loyalty

Rewards Faster

comments (46)   Comment FAQ

---

leeann9263	was reloading my card online yesterday & noticed I
11/9/2012 7:27 AM	had earned 4 rewards and wasn't notified via email. I
	miss receiving the postcard in the mail....

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Nelsonak

11/17/2012 7:54 AM

In reply to: leeann9263

Don't mind not getting a postcard, but I agree we need at least an email. Baristas say they can't notify us even though they can see our rewards on the card and we can't. Doesn't make sense. Thinking about switching back to Ladro. They inform you!

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

davidfeather1

11/9/2012 7:12 PM

Very aggravated... I had 2 reward drinks expire before I could use them because I did not get an e-mail stating that they were available. Dissapointed in Starbucks.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

aanorris3

11/9/2012 7:49 PM

Can't stand the new system. Mine also expired before i could use it.
I don't like asking to check for a reward either. They look at you like it is
a big bother. Just deduct it from my next order if I have a reward!
Bring back the free soymilk and offer almond milk so I don't have
to go to Whole Foods for my Chai with almond milk. I really dislike
your new rewards program!

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

bkmo11599

11/10/2012 4:17 PM

Bring back the free syrup. Also, waiting for a post card wasnt so bad, seeing that I never missed a reward. Seems like everything in this new reward system was jus a way for starbucks to save themselves money but try to pawn it off as a benefit to those of us on the rewards program. Very dissapointed...

candella1
Reply   Flagged
11/11/2012 5:38 PM

I recently signed up and am realizing the star count
isn't accurate. I have two transactions made with my
card and didn't not earn rewards. These two were tall
drinks; i didn't know we had to spend a certain dollar
amount. Whenever i ask a barista for answers either
they make up something or say they don't know.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

lebaoduy
11/11/2012 8:27 PM

I also didn't receive any email regarding my rewards,
and they just happened to be expired before I could
even use it..... Dissapointed

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

bneville
11/11/2012 9:51 PM

Hadn't realized until a few days ago that you no longer
deduct the charge of soy milk with my Gold card.
Checked on-line to see what was up and looks like you
have changed your policies regarding soy. Sorry to
hear that. Now there is no incentive to get my soy chai
from Starbucks when you charge more for soy than
some of the other coffee establishments. Have to
re-think my options.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Electric_Kite_Flyer
11/12/2012 10:43 AM

I have always assumed that you were earning interest
off the funds we depositeed on our cards while you
waited for us to use them at your stores. Locally we
have stores that have been at the 10 drink reward
level long before you went to 12 and they do not
require that I pre load a card.This seems like a money
grab!

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

tborlik
11/12/2012 1:12 PM

This whole "new" system is crazy. I don't get emails
and I can't find how many "rewards" I earn on my
account on the website.....just how many more stars or
drinks I need to get a "free" drink. Can someone tell
me where I can obtain this information. Maybe I
should start buying my coffee elsewhere.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

cellospue

12/20/2012 12:23 PM

In reply to: tborlik

The rewards history just doesn't seem to work most of the time so I can't find out the expiration dates of stars. I have gotten sympathy and some free drinks but the history button still does not consistently work.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

6407jpn

11/12/2012 2:04 PM

The reason I registered my card on line was for the free soy upgrade and now I find out you took that away....sigh

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

linda.j.myers@gmail.com shows I have two free drinks rewards have a gold

11/13/2012 5:37 AM   card---nt notified nt able to print off coupon

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

bigeric23

11/13/2012 6:31 AM

I've never heard such whining in my entire life. . . . "I don't get free soy milk?" I'm going to cry and stomp my feet and threaten to go elsewhere.

Grow up!

Starbucks is a business; businesses are out to make money. Their primary concern isn't your happiness—it's making money (BIG shocker). Starbucks sells overpriced coffee (like every coffeehouse), so if you're struggling financially, stop being lazy and make your java at home.

I encourage you, please, start acting like adults.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

onoffice   In reply to: bigeric23

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

11/16/2012 7:42 AM   It was free and now it isn't

rarekismet

11/23/2012 5:02 PM

In reply to: bigeric23

When you're a grown-up you'll understand, little one.

You are a jerk. Try having Celiac Disease (meaning no gluten---nothing with wheat, barley or rye) & being lactose intollerant. My starbucks was one of the few things I could look forward to on a regular basis that i didn't have to prepare myself at home just to make sure i wouldn't get sick...and let me tell you, buying things that are gluten free & lactose free are EXPENSIVE...ever little extra bit hurts...even syrups & soy. I guarantee I spend about twice as much as the average person on food.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

mrputtputt

12/14/2012 9:37 AM

In reply to: bigeric23

sounds like you're the jerk here and oblivious to customer service.

the system ***** right now. no notifications. i like saving and not having to worry about a post card. but for crying out loud, don't say the baristas can tell us what and how much free rewards we have like they did during announcement. because they cannot. it assumes we're going to starbucks.com all the time. i don't. no need to really since i reload at the store.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

ConnieBell17

11/13/2012 1:09 PM

Seems a lot of people are missing rewards by not recieving emails. I have not recieved the gold card, let along an email for my rewards. I was notified of Gold Card status in the summer...July maybe? Still waiting for that gold card to arrive in the mail. Best reward was free syrup and soy. Hopefully Starbucks is using the $$ saved to pay for workers benefits!

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

100

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

bdevinejr
alejandramonge
11/13/2012 1:45 PM
11/14/2012 7:57 AM

I have really cut back my coffee consumption! I really
How long will it take to receive the rewards? After
DISLIKE the changes in the program! I haven't been
October the 16 I already reached two rewards and
notified of any of my free drinks... And now that I have
haven't receive no email or notification at all
to pay .50 for my syrup... That's like an extra one to
two dollars a day! I give... Now I have pretty much
Reply   Flagged   Permalink
switched to Brandbrewed coffee once or twice a day.
again...

NMYouthguy

11/14/2012 4:06 PM

MOST DISAPPOINTED in the new program. While
On the web site, if you click on your name, where it
says "Hello (your name) it drops a box down with a
summary of your account info, like
summary of your account info, like how many stars
you currently have and how many rewards you have
waiting for you, it does not tell you when they expire.
Just discovered this. Additionally, I have not received
an email to notify me of my free drinks, found them
on the app accidentally...

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

chunsoo1

11/14/2012 4:57 PM

i dont understand how so many people can have
expired rewards, when the program just started in
mid-October. they should be good for at least 30 days.
also, please advise where on my starbucks account
site where it states what the expiration date(s) are.
the website says the email notification lists the
expiration date, but it does not.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

mcmahodc

11/14/2012 5:03 PM

Can no longer see rewards on the website. I'm a daily
Starbucks customer and have no idea where my
rewards should show up. I assumed (stupid me) that it
would just automatically add to my card---but NO! I
need to speek magic words to the barista. Of course if
I forget that I had the magic text/email then POOF!
the secret words expire.
Alterra is calling my name.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

mrskklynn

11/14/2012 9:19 PM

I have to say, I am quite displeased that starbucks has
opted to discontinue the complimentary extra shots,
syrups, or soy substitues. That is one reason I enjoyed
being a gold member and tried to quickly keep my
gold status at the beginning of the year. Being

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

charged extra because you are lactose intolerant is
mursich
absurd. Guess I'll be making my own coffee's or going
11/14/2012 11:11 PM
to Peet's. I'm on strike, til they bring the old rewards
back.

Well, Mr. Matthew G--director, Global Brand Loyalty,
looks like
you're losing your loyal followers. I agree with them.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

    Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

mz_jonesy

11/15/2012 11:46 AM

Very disappointed. SBUXs thinks new program is
EXCITING? Nope! It's exactly what SBUX does best:
BS MARKETING. It's insulting you'd assume custs are
that **** dumb. Here's the kicker: custs are not
proactively notified @ the register they have rewards
they can redeem. What a great strategy for not paying
out rewards: "Hopefully they'll forget." Once my SBUX
card is empty I'll be getting my $4 lattes elsewhere.
And I'll not be giving SBUX cards to
friends,family,colleagues,customers this xmas

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Gemini3162

11/15/2012 2:37 PM

I don't like the new method either - my drinks are
more expensive now without the free syrup and soy
milk and I got my 1st email today stating that I have a
free drink but when I go to my account, it shows that I
still need 4 more stars. I hate having expiration dates
as I preferred to save my rewards for when my cash
was short or I wanted something extra special that
cost more. I think this was Starbucks way to save
more money, and then the employees aren't properly
trained either. CHANGE BACK

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

michellereade

11/15/2012 10:57 PM

I agree, it's a most confusing system. Not sure why, if
you have earned a free drink, the next time you use
your card you don't automatically receive that drink
for free. And, if they expire, without you knowing you
need to ask the barista to check if you have a free
drink reward - what a scam!

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

Arolfson
Nmep1865
11/16/2012 12:03 AM
11/16/2012 6:42 AM

This is horrible change. Being charged extra for soy is already a scam, and having to wait around like an idiot trying to ask the busy baristas if I can have some soy instead of getting it at the self service area is ridiculous too. I can't eat most of the food making this program totally pointless now. I also have expired rewards as well, this new program is the worst. Whole Foods and PEETS from now on.

Based on what I see here either Starbucks doesn't care what their customers opinion is or they just don't read these comments. It took me a while to see that I had awards only to find out that if you don't ask for them, then you don't get them. This is the computer age, if I have an iPhone that can quick pay for my older you would think that they could fix the program to automatically use the rewards.

Good by Starbucks, hello McDonalds!!!
Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

rayalur

11/16/2012 7:17 AM

I am beyond disappointed and totally agree with others that I don't choose to drink soy milk because I want to pay extra money for it. I drink it because I cannot drink regular milk! It's insane to charge a fee for soy milk, which costs just about the same as regular milk. Between this and the horrible customer service, the lack of consistency with my ($6) lattes and the lack of interest Starbucks has in listning to their most loyal customers, I would say I'm pretty much done. Thanks.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

rdouglas312

11/16/2012 1:08 PM

I'm confused about how to get a free refill! I asked an employee once after ordering my latte. He said within 2 hours I can get one, but not a latte, a drip. At another store, I ordered my latte, then within 2 hours tried to get a free drip. The person told me no can do since I ordered a latte! How does that make sense. If I order a cheaper drink, I'll get a free refill! Does Starbucks really want me to order a order cheaper drinks to get a free refill?

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

daners33

11/17/2012 12:03 AM

Because my daily coffee now costs me $.50 more, I have had to cut back on the number of visits I make to stretch my coffee budget. By that logic, I'm not really earning rewards "faster," am I?

I also really enjoyed the syrup reward because I only

103

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

ask for about half a serving of syrup. Seems unfair that

mcmedel
11/17/2012 7:51 AM

I should have to pay for a full serving. Local coffee shops are starting to look pretty good to me....

Reply   Flagged

I joined the loyalty program only for reduced prices on soy milk, and now there is no reason for me to stay in the program. For someone who has no option but soy milk and who has been drinking five times a week a

Permalink

venti soy wet capuccino for two years, this is an invitation for me to take my business elsewhere. I have tons of other good options!

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

dtortal71@hotmail.com

11/18/2012 7:36 AM

totally agree with all..if you earned a free drink, please send us an email at least. Or when they swipe our card it will tell them that we can get a free drink/item today, just like my Panera Bread rewards card. They ask me if I want to get it now or later and reminds me when it expires now that's CS service!

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

ikathuria

11/19/2012 11:14 AM

i had been a loyal customer (spending several thousands dollars/yr) until your recent change regarding soy. Typically, I used to buy one drink a day and on many occasions drinks for collegues, friends and family.

One of the main reason I went there was due to your free soy program for card members. I'm sure you don't care, but, since your poicy change, of charging for soy (i am lactose intolerant) I have decided to spend my money elsewhere. Hopefully, your views will change.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Ckolson58

11/25/2012 12:19 AM

Argh!!! My rewards expired before I noticed. I did not get an email! Very unhappy. Not only did I miss out on my drinks but I no longer get my free syrup either. Well, The Nordstrom's coffee bar is closer...

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

darknymph25

11/25/2012 4:23 AM

I am *severely* lactose intolerant and now have to pay extra for all my lactose-free milk or soy milk. How does this constitute a *REWARD* for my patronage at

104

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and-...

your coffee chain? I reached gold level and I am now
sassy57477 being punished because I am really unhappy about the change on how get our
the extra money I will spend information on our free drinks. I have missed out on
on lactose-free milk will negate any of the "faster several of my free drinks. I go to Starbucks everyday
rewards you are offering, cost-wise. Absolutely to my handcrafted drinks. I relied on my free drink
infuriating! It was the ONLY reason I ever chose to get card to remind me I had a free drink. An email
a Starbucks card. You are losing a customer. showing that I earned my free drink and when it
expires would be helpful. I could at least print it out
Reply   **Flagged**   **Permalink**
myself as a reminder. I hope you do have a quick fix in
order to keep your loyal Starbucks members happy.

Reply   **Flagged**   **Permalink**

msahaas   In reply to: sassy57477

12/8/2012 3:00 PM

missed your free drink like so many others? That
was probably the idea.

Reply   **Flagged**   **Permalink**

mictyler   I didn't realize that you changed your policy until I was

12/2/2012 1:42 PM   charged for syrup. When I questioned the charge your

baristas had no idea why I was charged. This

happened twice and the third time just last week, the

barista said card members no longer get it for free. I

will finish this card and not purchase any others for me

or gifts. This was the only reason for me register.

Reply   **Flagged**   **Permalink**

vickisutherland   No syrup or soy since Oct. 16 = Starbucks= -$387.10

12/4/2012 8:38 AM   Other Vendors = +$318.50

Reply   **Flagged**   **Permalink**

msahaas   Since the soy option was dropped, i don't feel that i

12/8/2012 2:58 PM   should be punished for having an autoimmune disease

that causes lactose intolerance. Especially when milk

costs the same or more. It sends a message across

that they are greedy and don't think much of their

costumers. I stopped going to Starbucks and bought

the Mr. Coffee Latte Machine. So long soy, then so

long Starbucks.

Bringing You Rewards Faster (and Tastier) | Starbucks Coffee Company http://www.starbucks.com/blog/bringing-you-rewards-faster-and...

---

psvmm11
Reply   Flagged
12/11/2012 4:54 AM

~~I'm also disappointed about the free soy being taken~~
Permalink
away. Starbucks was a treat for me and my children but now some of the insentive has just been taken away since soy is necessary for me to enjoy my latte :(

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

---

janetjaffke

12/14/2012 8:44 AM

My reward expired as well. I assume when I used my phone app that when I had a reward it would automatically be used for my next drink? Do I need to tell the Barista I have a reward so they can do some magic with the scanner. I really think the rewards program helps me justify the expense of starbucks but not if it's not easy to redeem the benefit.

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Tarrab

12/17/2012 1:09 PM

I didn't receive the email for the christmas rewards and was wondering if only certain people can get that? Please let me know if I qualify for the reward christmas program.
Thank you
Tarra

Reply   Flagged   Permalink

Leave a Comment

You must be signed in to comment.
Don't have a Starbucks account? Create an account now.

Username *

[   ]

Password *

[   ]

Forgot your username or password?

Sign In

FAQ

GOT AN IDEA?　　VIEW IDEAS　　IDEAS IN ACTION

Hi there, *Sign In* to make a comment.

Follow us on

Ideas so far

Search Ideas

PRODUCT IDEAS

32,462	Coffee & Espresso Drinks
3,305	Frappuccino® Beverages
9,510	Tea & Other Drinks
14,865	Food
7,793	Merchandise & Music
15,914	Starbucks Card
2,685	New Technology
10,466	Other Product Ideas

EXPERIENCE IDEAS

7,797	Ordering, Payment, & Pick-Up
14,014	Atmosphere & Locations
10,783	Other Experience Ideas

INVOLVEMENT IDEAS

4,768	Building Community
8,846	Social Responsibility
5,440	Other Involvement Ideas
1,454	Outside USA

Vote

2,820
points

Orange Lids

Share f t +

Posted on 12/27/2012 4:28 PM
by aworldfreeofms

I believe Starbucks can do something so simple to bring an extraordinary amount of awareness to the disease of Multiple Sclerosis. By placing "orange" lids on all hot beaverage cups during MS Awareness Week (March 11 - 17, 2013), Starbucks can join the movement to one day live in a world free of MS.

Comments [76]

Hide Comments [76]

1 **2** Next

CoffeeGeek
12/27/2012 5:25 PM

This is a great cause. Please share with everyone.

carobean22
12/27/2012 5:39 PM

Love this!!!

LeesMSketeers
12/27/2012 6:12 PM

Lees MSketeers Foundation mission is to help others and to spread MS Awareness. Our wish is for the Orange Awareness Ribbon to be as recognized the pink ribbon. A World Free of MS Shares the same passion. I hope you can make difference during the month of March.

Jerseydeva
12/27/2012 10:12 PM

Spread the word for MS awareness please!

cmarts4
12/27/2012 10:26 PM

I agree with aworldfreeofms.

Putting orange lids on lids would be economically and socially viable. Coloring lids would be inexpensive in comparison to the social return of awareness lids. Starbucks strives to be socially responsible therefore its the perfect brand to get involved in the movement.

Lets make the orange ribbon known in every household and lets give MS the attention it deserves. :)

cmaz
12/28/2012 6:28 AM

I love this idea!!! More companies should spread MS awareness.

soccercatz
12/28/2012 7:01 AM

Approximately 400,000 Americans have MS, and every week about 200 people are diagnosed. World-wide, MS affects about 2.1 million people...I was diagnosed four years ago - my kids have been working hard to spread the message of MS and to turn AZ orange for me and

others like me - I hope Starbucks will become a leader in bringing this condition to the forefront - help us Erase MS, because it is horrible living with the MonSter

---

JulesC24

12/28/2012 7:48 AM

Great idea :) Help raise MS Awareness.

---

yogagolf

12/28/2012 9:34 AM

Please do this - and help us get the word out about MS. Awareness is great - putting out a collection cup would be even greater!! Research costs a lot. I'm sure once people know the reason behind the orange lids, they'd want to contribute.

---

mccwalker

12/28/2012 11:23 AM

Wonderful idea!! FUMS!!

TEAMLOVEBIKEMS

12/29/2012 12:45 PM

I agree with aworldfreeofms. Putting orange lids on lids would be economically and socially viable. Coloring lids would be inexpensive in comparison to the social return of awareness lids. Starbucks strives to be socially responsible therefore its the perfect brand to get involved in the movement. Lets make the orange ribbon known in every household and lets give MS the attention it deserves. :) well said cmarts4! Thanks ;)

---

lbfightsms

12/29/2012 1:51 PM

LOVE this idea, I have had MS for over 15 years now and sadly there is still an under-awareness as well as a clear distinction between Multiple Sclerosis and Musular Dystrophy. I truly feel that if Starbucks can put orange lids on their cups during MS Awareness Week, that would make a huge impact on questions, leading to knowledge, leading to more awareness. I also believe that MS Awareness Week should be a month long just like other causes such as Breast Cancer, simply because MS effects so many at any age, while for the most part Breast Cancer is mostly women and commonly at a later age but most of all because Breast Cancer has the awareness and collective activism that has finally started making strides to bring about a cure, it's time Multiple Sclerosis was put in that same category. Thank you Lisa

---

dsullyo829

12/29/2012 4:55 PM

This is a fantastic idea!! I have MS and I am a Starbucks gold card member. We need a high profile company to promote awareness of this terrible disease! I would love to see this happen! Great idea!!!

---

clb24

12/29/2012 4:57 PM

I believe the impact for just one week would be AMAZING!!!

---

zlynne

12/29/2012 5:06 PM

what a GREAT idea!!

GlennLynn

12/29/2012 5:15 PM

PLEASE DO THIS!!! Such a great idea! Every little bit of awareness helps all of us with MS raise money to find a cure!!!

Thank you!!!

---

julesverne11

12/30/2012 4:44 AM

Great Idea! This would made a difference in my life. I've walked in 2 challenge walks,, 3 locals walks and have raised collectivly over $18,000.00 dollars. Starbucks- this would push us closer to a World Free of Multiple Sclerosis.

Lougirl

12/30/2012 10:38 AM

Awesome idea. Same goes for breast cancer awareness - pink lids. What a great way for Starbucks to be a part of something great. I'm a 34 year old mom of four small kids and was just recently diagnosed. It's a wretched disease that very few people are aware of. Orange lids would lead to questions. Questions lead to knowledge and knowledge would lead to action.

---

lulu0311

12/30/2012 11:07 AM

I love this idea! Something so simple could go a long way in spreading awareness of MS. #supportingmysisterwithMS

Mhamm

12/30/2012 11:50 AM

---

sbowen90

12/30/2012 11:51 AM

Such an amazing idea! I was recently diagnosed in April and I'm 22 years old. Had no idea what MS was. But if this happened it would be such blessing to have this part of the MS Awareness Week. This would mean the world to the people who are MS fighters and their love ones that are also right by our side being our support system and fighting this disease with us. Let's find a cure(:

---

coffeefan45

12/30/2012 12:16 PM

This is a wonderful idea!!! I was diagnosed in 2009, and this would bring much needed awareness to this terrible disease, and enjoy a great cup of coffee! :)

TAD1973

12/30/2012 1:53 PM

Love this idea! As a person with MS, awareness is imperative for family and community members. How about orange lids for the entire month of march? Maybe the lids could include a stat about MS and/or MS suffers.

KJVideoTours

12/30/2012 2:06 PM

Good Idea!

---

kmainla

12/30/2012 3:16 PM

Great idea! Awareness will help many!!!

---

cureMS

12/30/2012 4:30 PM

I would love to see this happen. I am a single mom living with MS. It makes life much harder at times. Please do orange lids for at least the week in March. We really do need more people to understand and be aware of this disease. Thanks, Lisa B. CT

---

msfightingmom

12/30/2012 5:19 PM

I would love to see Starbucks support MS!!! I think orange lids in March is an amazing idea!!!! Our kids are holding a sock hop at their local High School to raise money for MS. What another great promotion for High School kids to see their favorite coffee shop supporting a great cause!!!!! We are a Starbucks family already but WOW!!! Orange lids in March very classy!!!

---

coffeeiscool

12/31/2012 12:14 AM

wow! great idea! :)

---

bluskyes

12/31/2012 8:02 AM

I have MS and love Starbucks coffee, this would be a great way to raise awareness to the masses who know nothing about this disease.

---

pjkin4

Wonderful idea! Go Orange in March!

12/31/2012 12:45 PM

Hoog

12/31/2012 1:43 PM

I think this should be for more than just a week.

KarenDeke12345

12/31/2012 1:59 PM

Great idea, different lids to help all of the charities throughout the year. Orange for M.S. Awareness and maybe a link on their website to make a donation directly to the National M.S. Society. We all need to support our communities and the charity fund raising can really benefit from an organization as huge as Starbucks. Please give your support! Thank you!

rhill

12/31/2012 2:17 PM

Please help raise MS Awareness!

dlefler77

12/31/2012 2:19 PM

I think this is a wonderful idea you hear so much about other causes and not to much about M.S. I feel it gets down played alot and I struggle everyday with just getting out of bed. Please do this for awarness this little change on your part could mean a bigger change to M.S. Thank you in addvance if you deside to do this. If not thank you for even thinking of doing this.

kiwi762

12/31/2012 5:16 PM

This would be great, but would it be to muchto ask for, for one week? Why not do it for the month of March? This would be to much more. Plus if it's for the full month it would bring the need for MS research to the forefront more. I was dx January of 2009, I have had nothing but problems trying to get my MS under control. I have gone through so many neurologists as people go though underwear it seems. I am with a neuro now that is also with research, and I'm going to get into a study this month if I qualify. People know about MS but don't think about it like Cancer. We need to get funding for all these diseases that effect people.

Lexy 2012

1/1/2013 6:33 AM

What a simple,wonderful idea. If Starbucks will not support the MS community, I have no problem going somewhere else for my beverages.

KitMinden

1/1/2013 8:08 AM

vEstimates are that there are over 1 million people with multiple sclerosis in the United States alone. It is a deadly disease. Half of us die from compliations due to the infections that come with MS. More of us spend our lives shut in from the world, in wheelchairs or stuck in bed, our bodies and brains slowly degrading, separating us from family and friends. Our careers vanish, our hobbies gather dust on the shelf, our lifes are muted. We often live in pain and spasm. It's a serious illness that attackes so many. We need a cure, and we need it now. Please help by supporting this cause and raising awareness for MS.
Kit Minden

Director, Living for a Cure

babybrice21

1/1/2013 9:02 AM

This would be a wonderful way to get out the word about the MonSter! Please vote and support it!

babybrice21

1/1/2013 9:03 AM

Good job, Kit! Well said!

kpolnik

1/1/2013 10:10 AM

Great idea!! I have to close friends with MS! Lets make this happen

KEHV

1/1/2013 11:40 AM

I agree with this, but I also think letting patrons donate an ammount if they want should be added. Or a similar donation idea.

Tatims

1/1/2013 9:11 PM

This is a great idea.

---

cpietroski

1/2/2013 7:20 AM

To have Starbucks supporting MS Awareness would be phenomenal! I am a huge Starbucks lover and have MS myself - it would be two things I love to support, together!

Mercedesx1

1/2/2013 7:44 AM

This is a wonderful idea! Please share with everyone! One of my best friends has MS, I would love to see Starbucks support MS awareness!

---

jenniferhivry

1/2/2013 8:20 AM

What a GREAT idea to help spread awareness of MS!! Love it!

---

brunoconquest

1/2/2013 8:28 AM

Great way to spread awareness of an otherwise unknown disease!!!

---

laurieannz

1/2/2013 8:28 AM

Insider tip: sleeves would be more doable. You would need a 18mos lead time for cups or lids and it is super expensive. any chance this can be updated @aworldfreeofms

---

tnnguyen12

1/2/2013 8:44 AM

That's a wonderful idea!

---

suprteachermom

1/2/2013 8:50 AM

Orange lids would be a subtle yet powerful way to raise awareness of MS.. I too was diagnosed in 2011. Beforethat I was completely healthy, active, never having ever to step into the doctors office.. I had not a clue as to what MS was or what it entailed-- sadly I had to learn as I experienced my first episode. It would be amazing, if Starbucks (one of my favorite places) joined in spreading the awareness of MS. (a cause now near and dear to my heart). Thank you :)

---

msninga2550

1/2/2013 9:07 AM

would love to rock an orange lid with my next drink

---

1 2 Next

Hide Comments [76]

Store Finder
Nutrition Info
Customer Service
StarbucksStore.com
Starbucks™ Shared Planet™
STARBUCKS(RED)
FAQ

FAQ

GOT AN IDEA?   VIEW IDEAS   IDEAS IN ACTION

Hi there,   Sign In   to make a comment.

Follow us on

Ideas so far

Vote

Search Ideas

PRODUCT IDEAS

32,462	**Coffee & Espresso Drinks**
3,305	**Frappuccino® Beverages**
9,510	**Tea & Other Drinks**
14,865	**Food**
7,793	**Merchandise & Music**
15,914	**Starbucks Card**
2,685	**New Technology**
10,466	**Other Product Ideas**

EXPERIENCE IDEAS

7,797	**Ordering, Payment, & Pick-Up**
14,014	**Atmosphere & Locations**
10,783	**Other Experience Ideas**

INVOLVEMENT IDEAS

4,768	**Building Community**
8,846	**Social Responsibility**
5,440	**Other Involvement Ideas**
1,454	**Outside USA**

Orange Lids

Share [f] [t] [+]

Posted on 12/27/2012 4:28 PM
by aworldfreeofms

2,820
points

I believe Starbucks can do something so simple to bring an extraordinary amount of awareness to the disease of Multiple Sclerosis. By placing "orange" lids on all hot beaverage cups during MS Awareness Week (March 11 - 17, 2013), Starbucks can join the movement to one day live in a world free of MS.

Comments [76]

Hide Comments [76]

Previous **1** 2

kellyp8701 1/2/2013 9:20 AM	Awesome Idea!!!
Charleen102 1/2/2013 1:26 PM	I am a huge Starbucks fan, and I have MS, I often have a cup of Starbucks in the afternoon to help fight fatigue...I think this would be an amazing gesture by Starbucks, and a great partnership!
michraf 1/2/2013 1:35 PM	Love it!
Julieah419 1/2/2013 1:41 PM	Excellent idea! Excellent cause!!
ernurseohio 1/2/2013 3:29 PM	There is a strong push for cancer awareness...however few know the impact and unpredictable path that those of us with MS suffer. This would be a great way for you to stand up and help us raise awareness!
lesbear29 1/2/2013 4:25 PM	GREAT idea...Please do this it would be so amazing to see people supporting a disease I suffer from get and some extra support.
nocoffeelove 1/2/2013 5:05 PM	Having Starbucks partner with the MS Society is a great idea. Orange lids or sleeves would be a great awareness tool.
rkforbes 1/2/2013 6:24 PM	As long as Starbucks doesn't charge more $$ to cover the cost for the orange lids :-)
TareVanE	Great idea to spread the word fir MS awareness! I'd def rock an orange lid!

1/2/2013 6:39 PM

Cyndi Kinsey

1/2/2013 8:07 PM

Please spread the word for MS awareness!

MyKismet

1/2/2013 8:23 PM

Love this idea! Great cause!

Tiggerriffic

1/2/2013 9:04 PM

Agree 100% - what a great idea!!!!

---

smilemymia

1/2/2013 11:06 PM

My sister Mary Magdalene was diagnosed with MS when she was 22 years old. She was 34 when she passed away from complication due to MS. I vote for the orange lids in memory of my sister and all who have been diagnosed with MS.

---

dc1nj

1/3/2013 7:26 AM

There just isn't enough exposure for MS support. If Starbucks could be the one to do it, wow! Starbucks is a leader in quality, service & supports free trade. Of course it doesn't hurt that I love it & purchase it regularly. Please Starbucks choose MS awareness to be the one, orange lid!! MS fighter, Starbucks drinker!! ty, dc

---

Aquavation

1/3/2013 8:36 AM

Fabulous Idea! If you care about this cause, another way you can show your support is to personalize a MS reusable water bottle and 20% will go to the Illinois Chapter here: http://msillinois.aquavation.org

---

ms_tanyam

1/3/2013 8:39 AM

This is a great idea. I think they should do this the month of MARCH. With starbucks we could shout it out to the world about MS.

---

nwichard

1/3/2013 9:56 AM

This is such a great idea. It would help raise more awareness for this wicked disease!

Bonnie Sue

1/3/2013 12:02 PM

This is a wonderful idea. I would find a way to get to Starbucks...would love to be part of the Orange Lids. I don't get out much...but this would be a real reason to try. I was diagnosed in 2011...my life has changed a lot since.

---

kstroessler

1/3/2013 2:54 PM

love this idea! I'm a lady who lives with MS and LOVES her Starbucks -- I'd appreciate so much seeing a company I admire supporting a cause so near to my and so many others' lives.

Dstevensjr

1/3/2013 3:34 PM

This would be amazing :)

GmaHarper

1/3/2013 4:43 PM

Best idea ever!

PumpkinCrazy

1/3/2013 9:18 PM

Love This!!! Would be great to have this happen. Orange lid should include the MS logo and maybe their advertisements can promote the awareness. Sometimes letting the public know envolvement and/or awareness of a cause makes good business.

---

sblair66

1/4/2013 6:11 AM

awesome idea... I was diagnosed 15 years ago.. get rid of this monkey on our backs... thanks for helping Starbucks.. Love Green tea latte... woot

---

cavaliercountr

1/4/2013 8:08 PM

IF YOU DO AWARENESS FOR ONE YOU NEED TO DO THEM FOR ALL. I HAVE SJOGREN'S.

Lynnoo68

1/4/2013 10:05 PM

Please help us raise awareness for MS. Starbucks is an incredible marketing tool to help further this cause and it is so needed! Orange lids!!!

KariJ

1/4/2013 11:35 PM

Supporting MS by using orange lids during MS Awareness week is an amazing idea that should be considered by Starbucks! It is a great way to spread awareness about this autoimmune disease. So many places support cancer, yet certain diseases such as Multiple Sclerosis are overlooked. I feel this would be a wonderful opportunity for Starbucks to gain popularity as a business by those living with and people who know or care for MS patients. Let's do it!!

Previous 1 2

Hide Comments [76]

FAQ

GOT AN IDEA?   **VIEW IDEAS**   **IDEAS IN ACTION**

Hi there,   Sign In   to make a comment.   Follow us on

Ideas so far

Search Ideas

PRODUCT IDEAS

32,462	**Coffee & Espresso Drinks**
3,305	**Frappuccino® Beverages**
9,510	**Tea & Other Drinks**
14,865	**Food**
7,793	**Merchandise & Music**
15,914	**Starbucks Card**
2,685	**New Technology**
10,466	**Other Product Ideas**

EXPERIENCE IDEAS

7,797	**Ordering, Payment, & Pick-Up**
14,014	**Atmosphere & Locations**
10,783	**Other Experience Ideas**

INVOLVEMENT IDEAS

4,768	**Building Community**
8,846	**Social Responsibility**
5,440	**Other Involvement Ideas**
1,454	**Outside USA**

Vote

Share [f] [t] [+]

Speedy way to order a favorite drink

Posted on 6/10/2012 7:05 PM
by **mark a smith**

3,730
points

On the iPhone Starbucks App, there is a spot for your favorite drinks and how you like them. It would be perfect if I could select from a favorite drink and how I want it prepared, tap on it and get a special bar code for the Barosta to scan on the iPhone. Then once they scan the barcode from the phone, a sticker would print the type of drink and all particulars on how I want my beverage prepared. Then I can go back to the card on the iPhone and pay for my beverage. This would also save the Barista from having to enter the order. They would scan and the sting charge would immediately be rung up. This would also take into account things from your card benefits like free shots, or free refills at a locations etc. the computer would print out a label that would go on the cup with the name of the card holder, drink, and specs on how to prepare it.

Comments [25]

Linked Ideas

Skip the line :: Order from my iPhone
Posted at 9/19/2012 8:25 AM by **ryandahl** | **18 Comments**

Add ordering to iPhone app that sends the order to nearest Starbucks computer so it will be ready on arrival
Posted at 7/28/2012 12:19 AM by **nykibell** | **2 Comments**

Order 'Favorite Drink' from your iPhone app
Posted at 5/2/2012 8:29 PM by **samba6566** | **0 Comments**

Iphone App Add-ON
Posted at 6/25/2011 3:29 AM by **edavid2002** | **3 Comments**

Order Drinks from Starbucks App
Posted at 12/16/2010 8:07 AM by **JesusTorres** | **9 Comments**

Hide Comments [25]

sbx_bean

11/26/2012 12:00 PM

This idea is currently under review.

---

alexs001

6/26/2012 10:25 AM

I'd like to voice my support for this idea. Barcode scanners have already been deployed, it would mostly be software changes in the cash register systems and a little extra work in the phone app.

---

jonathan83

6/27/2012 10:29 AM

I came here to post this idea but am glad someone else thought of it first. As a barista, it would be easier to just have the customer scan their order, especially if it is very specific, in order to get it right and an expedient way, then simply copy or print it onto the cup. Thank you for supporting this great idea!!

---

dms1808

6/29/2012 4:25 PM

I have to voice my support for this. I order a Starbucks double shot increased to six espresso's, sub hazelnut instead of classic and top it with 3 oz of heavy cream. I travel a lot and I really get tired of training every barista from here to

---

California. By allowing me to provide a pre configured recipe for my drink the answer would print out for every barista to read (that's if reading is a requirement) Please comment this up more!

---

beliga

7/1/2012 7:05 PM

LOVE this idea! It would really speed up the line too. I like my drink a specific way, but a lot of times it takes up too much time to give the details. This would make my life that much easier when I'm behind schedule, but stopping in to get my drink.

---

xoarsman

7/5/2012 9:37 PM

This occurred to me today; seems a great way to expedite speed of service and reduce misunderstandings. Our POS can tell us what to write on the cup, and we can welcome traveling customers (show most frequently visited locations: visiting us from Florida Bob? What brings you to San Leandro?). Can't wait to see this implemented.

TexSanity

7/9/2012 7:57 AM

It would also facilitate ordering a "round of drinks for the office". Storing a list of drinks and sending all to the store either via barcode scan or even by SMS. It could debit the user's Starbucks card and skip the register altogether.

Each drink with it's own sticker with name of Orderer, and name of recipient.

I'd much rather be called by my name, than by my coffee order.

BLRmiscreant

7/19/2012 5:49 AM

This would be a wonderful idea if only the SB app worked to begin with. Please! Don't add any new features to the apps until you've fixed the -countless- bugs in the existing ones!

---

liquidgold

8/8/2012 5:49 PM

I've been waiting for this for ages. I hope they do it. I wan't to have all my favorites as options for quick easy selection. By having a drop down for all the different options people would also know what they could choose instead of having to ask.

It should display the price of what you've created and let you use your free drink instead of having it mailed to you. And if you haven't gone to SB in a while they could give you a discount right in the app for the next time you do, or for making large orders etc.

They should also add an NFC component to the app so that your friends can share their favorites with you, especially in the event you're buying for your friends/office.

Lbarza

8/8/2012 9:33 PM

That's a great idea! Even better would be able to select your previously customized drink from the app and submit the order from home (or the office/car) and when you click "submit" the GPS will open up showing the stores near you. You select the store, and when you get within 30 feet of the store entrance the barista will get the order (triggered by your phone GPS being near the store). You walk in the store and the barista says "Hi John! Your drink is ready"

---

jryne

8/15/2012 10:54 PM

I just wrote this same idea to corporate on another site. I thought it weird when I first got the app that it has a place for your favorite drinks and they are all just standard versions. How many people that patronize Starbucks just get a coffee.....? If I wanted just a coffee I would go to Dunkin Donuts or McDonalds for that. Do you know how long it takes to say SOLO grande nonfat no whip mocha..?? AND then to ask for a tall soy decaf no foam latte for my wife. And for the barista to repeat, write it on a cup, and then go to the cash register to type that all

in...... I must admitt that the local Starbucks baristas know our order, but the staff seems to continually change..........God forbid if you go to a grocery store or convention center (not real starbucks) .....They really have trouble....... I also agree with the rewards on the app......Great products, however the cleanliness and frequency of cleaning the tables could improve......Thanks for listening

---

HMAC

8/17/2012 2:03 PM

Said what I was thinking......

---

healtySpirit

8/18/2012 8:50 AM

It's a great idea but we need to realize that there are many stores that do not have a stickers printer, only drive thru stores have that because of this purpose. Now it will be easier for the barista to mark the cup from the register since the drink would appear on the screen. We want a good customer service so scanning paying and connecting with the person making the drink would a great combination.

Flashover68

8/23/2012 7:45 AM

WOW great minds think alike! Love this idea.

---

annedub

8/27/2012 9:16 PM

I have thought of this so many times! Amen.

Grinditout

8/30/2012 7:23 PM

I also support this idea. Take it even further; make sure the wi-fi signal extends out to the drive thru, order the drink from the car. Regular customers would automatically log in to the LAN as they approach, press the order from the favorite drinks menu and pay for it through their card on their phone. Faster drinks, faster check out, selling more coffee.

---

bryanminer

9/18/2012 3:12 PM

personally i think it could be fairly simple all you should have to do is program your favorite drinks into the app and then just have to scan once, the bar codes to me look like QR based i am sure they are more than capable of carrying over the information both for the order and for the payment

---

sbuxmocha

9/18/2012 5:39 PM

Kudos for the recommendation, but it's just not for me. I prefer to use the self-checkout where possible at most stores, except at Starbucks! I like chatting with the Partner at the register, I like placing my order, and I'm glad I haven't been in a store in ages that uses those horrible printed stickers for orders - it's so impersonal. I like the write on the cup method. Call me old school :) But, for the person who posted it, I see how some might like this idea and it would be great to be availble for those who would like it. Sorry for the thumbs down.

---

hmaxone

9/20/2012 10:05 PM

I've had this idea too! Have a scanner at the drive thru though as well..! speed up the line!

ChipChip

9/22/2012 12:08 PM

I want credit for my purchases when I make a purchase and my card is not loaded!

---

caitlingrace

9/23/2012 5:01 PM

I came on here to post this exact idea! Thanks for the super idea!

---

sdburkes

10/7/2012 5:51 PM

I came to post a very similar idea. I propose that there is a "order" or "purchase" queue in your Starbucks app. It's a location where you drag the drink which you want to order. Or in the case of my family, it is SIX drinks that I want to order. How it works: I search through my favorites, and pull them into the order location -- pick the Starbucks location (default = on site) and order. When in store, the QR reader is fine. One could even order while on the way to the drive through....

The main benefit: It takes a while for me to order 6 specialty drinks. And when I am in the drive through, it can take even longer getting each order, then relaying it to the barista. By the time I order the line behind me is 7 people long in the store and in the drive through. I wish I could make the process go faster.

 Names on the sticker is fine. ;-)

Mike Sooty

10/16/2012 12:30 PM

Brilliant idea Mark, I hope this idea is introduced soon.

---

alikelystory

11/2/2012 10:05 PM

I, too, came here to post this very idea. Please Starbucks! App it up. :)

---

dasbill

11/14/2012 10:47 PM

I just posted something about this on another thread. Awesome Idea for the Starbucks app, I would use it everytime.

Hide Comments [25]

Corporate Information

About Us
Jobs
Press Room
Investor Relations
Contact Us

Online Community

Twitter
Facebook
YouTube
Flickr

Quick Links

Store Finder
Nutrition Info
Customer Service
StarbucksStore.com
Starbucks™ Shared Planet™
STARBUCKS(RED)
FAQ

Powered By:

FAQ

GOT AN IDEA?   **VIEW IDEAS**   **IDEAS IN ACTION**

Hi there,   Sign In   to make a comment.

Follow us on

Ideas so far

Vote

Search Ideas

PRODUCT IDEAS

32,462	**Coffee & Espresso Drinks**
3,305	**Frappuccino® Beverages**
9,510	**Tea & Other Drinks**
14,865	**Food**
7,793	**Merchandise & Music**
15,914	**Starbucks Card**
2,685	**New Technology**
10,466	**Other Product Ideas**

EXPERIENCE IDEAS

7,797	**Ordering, Payment, & Pick-Up**
14,014	**Atmosphere & Locations**
10,783	**Other Experience Ideas**

INVOLVEMENT IDEAS

4,768	**Building Community**
8,846	**Social Responsibility**
5,440	**Other Involvement Ideas**
1,454	**Outside USA**

680
points

Bring the vanilla spice latte to the US!!

Share [facebook] [twitter] [+]

Posted on 3/2/2012 8:34 PM
by **Hayley**

I was just on the Starbucks UK website and saw this seasonal drink. It looks fabulous!

http://starbucks.co.uk/menu/beverage-list/espresso-beverages/vanilla-spice-latte

The description reads:

Starbucks signature espresso combined with freshly steamed milk, rich vanilla, and subtle hints of cardamom and spice. Topped with whipped cream, crushed vanilla bean and a touch of sugar

Please consider bringing this to the US!!

Comments

Hide Comments

Etherlilac

3/3/2012 7:45 AM

Oh my.... YES.

JitterBeanFrap

3/3/2012 10:07 AM

Nice! I wish this was the promotion for spring instead of boring old vanilla lattes and caramel machiattos. Voted up!

vlatte24

3/3/2012 1:48 PM

Yes!

Hayley
3/3/2012 2:28 PM

Thanks!! :)

Cafeslinger

3/3/2012 4:23 PM

Sounds fab. @Jitter, Starbucks is promoting Tribute, that is far better than any specialty latte any day of the year!

Hayley
3/3/2012 5:20 PM

Yes Tribute blend is by far my favorite! I'm so excited Starbucks is bring that back!

DadCooks

3/3/2012 6:10 PM

Sounds good.

Leave it to the folks across the pond to come up with a complex (yet simple ingredients) flavor.

JitterBeanFrap

3/3/2012 7:34 PM

@Slinger

I was only relating the Vanilla Spice to the espresso drinks we're promoting. And, I'm probably the only person in the world who is not a fan of Tribute.

Cafeslinger

3/3/2012 7:35 PM

Oh I know you were. I was simply pointing out the reason. And I'm a little excited. Sorry ;).

Etherlilac

3/4/2012 11:31 AM

gasp Not a fan of Tribute? I... can't comprehend that statement.

And I agree... Vanilla Latte and Caramel Machiatto? Oh yeah, that will bring 'em flooding in. At least it's better than the Coco Cappuccino.

Cafeslinger

3/4/2012 3:44 PM

Oh yea. Cocoa Cappuccino. Gag. I had blocked that from my memory. ;)

---

sbx_bean

3/5/2012 10:17 AM

That does sound good. Let's see if others agree. Share your votes and comments.

---

cupajoe4evamoe

3/5/2012 4:21 PM

VSL---anything sweet+something spice does sound very, very,....very NICE!...cupup.../\/\/\...=)

---

vlatte24

3/6/2012 5:16 AM

Sugar, Spice, and everything nice.

DadCooks

3/6/2012 4:54 PM

Sure better than snails, whales, and puppy dog tails **;o)**

---

cupajoe4evamoe

3/7/2012 11:55 AM

just Bring It Baby!!!...................whoowhaa!...=)

---

cupajoe4evamoe

3/29/2012 9:40 AM

this does sound good...but what's in the spice part?...curious cup....=)

Hayley

12/12/2012 12:26 PM

This still sounds good ;)

---

sbx_bean

We're working on this idea. We'll have more news to share soon.

12/17/2012 12:33 PM

Hide Comments

Corporate Information

About Us
Jobs
Press Room
Investor Relations
Contact Us

Online Community

Twitter
Facebook
YouTube
Flickr

Quick Links

Store Finder
Nutrition Info
Customer Service
StarbucksStore.com
Starbucks™ Shared Planet™
STARBUCKS(RED)
FAQ

Powered By:

© 2010 Starbucks Corporation. All rights reserved.   **Terms of Use**   **Privacy Policies**

FAQ

GOT AN IDEA?   VIEW IDEAS   IDEAS IN ACTION

Hi there,   *Sign In*   to make a comment.

Follow us on

Ideas so far

Search Ideas

PRODUCT IDEAS

32,462	Coffee & Espresso Drinks
3,305	Frappuccino® Beverages
9,510	Tea & Other Drinks
14,865	Food
7,793	Merchandise & Music
15,914	Starbucks Card
2,685	New Technology
10,466	Other Product Ideas

EXPERIENCE IDEAS

7,797	Ordering, Payment, & Pick-Up
14,014	Atmosphere & Locations
10,783	Other Experience Ideas

INVOLVEMENT IDEAS

4,768	Building Community
8,846	Social Responsibility
5,440	Other Involvement Ideas
1,454	Outside USA

Vote

660 points

Tell me when my rewards are expiring!

Share

Posted on 10/30/2012 4:22 PM
by Dadthedude

To my pleasant surprise, my Starbucks app told me that I have 11 rewards and 1 birthday reward waiting to be redeemed. Great news! However, according to the Starbucks website, I only have 30 days to redeem my reward. Not so great news, especially since I don't know the exact date they were all earned.

Starbucks, please modify your app and your website to provide me with information on when my rewards expire. It's not tough. All you need to do is post the expiration date next to each reward. If that takes too much room, then simply add one line to the notification that tells me how many rewards are expiring within the next 7 days. This way, I know to redeem them, not simply collect them!

Comments [15]

Linked Ideas

Mobile Rewards Reminder
Posted at 12/5/2012 2:31 PM by **OkieSBUX** | 0 Comments

In app reminder
Posted at 12/14/2012 1:51 PM by **Kenzielaine** | 0 Comments

Reward notification
Posted at 12/13/2012 10:27 PM by **Linnie999** | 0 Comments

Hide Comments [15]

BBdance

10/30/2012 4:45 PM

I am able to go to rewards details and see each star earned and when rewards were awarded, when they expire and when they have been used. All from both my app and online.

betterbefore

10/30/2012 4:51 PM

You can check when they expire, which I think is a great added (long time needed) feature. You need to go to your Sbux account online and get to that "stars earned" calendar page. It's very thorough.

DadCooks

10/30/2012 6:16 PM

Seeing the expiration date online or in the app is easy and clear. Too bad you cannot expend a little effort for your rewards.

carollk

10/30/2012 7:20 PM

If it was easy and clear, there wouldn't be so many posts about it. Once you get to the calendar page, you need to click on the drink earned symbol to see the expiration date. Of course, this assumes that you've found the calendar page, which is also not a straight-forward process.

BBdance

10/31/2012 4:34 AM

It's actually very easy - if it took me a minute that was a long time .... The website is easy to use and quite user friendly. The app - even easier.

carollk

10/31/2012 4:37 AM

The fact that the Reward History is behind a link in a small font called See More Details is not in the least user friendly. Just a couple of changes could eliminate many of these posts.

BBdance

10/31/2012 4:48 PM

Kinda getting petty - can you find it -yes - easily -yes. Just something else to complain about - yes.

carollk

10/31/2012 6:31 PM

Pointing out valid design issues that present problems for other people, if not yourself, is not being petty.

betterbefore

11/1/2012 6:29 AM

I will agree that it is not exactly straight fwd. but once you're there and click on the right things, it is (now...too bad not before this new plan...I could've called cust. service and told them of specifically dated drinks (mnths worth) that ended up 'expired', as opposed to 'redeemed' because I never got them;(very thorough now and detailed. Like most things online, you (I do, anyway) often have to play around for awhile and certainly go in with the attitude that it won't necessarily be a simple or straight fwd process.

carollk

11/1/2012 3:57 PM

But with just a couple of changes, it could be a simple and straightforward process. It's all part of good customer service.

betterbefore

11/1/2012 4:07 PM

ageeing with @carollk.

Dadthedude

11/2/2012 12:13 PM

For the record, when I originally saw this on my app, I did not notice the "Redeemed / Expired" info in the Details on my app. I'm glad the data is available to view.

My point has not changed, however. If Starbucks can post when a reward has been redeemed or has expired, it can do a better job of notifying me that a reward is *about to expire before it's too late.* I do not see why the burden should be on me to study my rewards history when I can be prompted on my rewards screen.

hnlworker

11/10/2012 5:44 AM

Totally agree with carollk. Making customers hunt for the expiration date on earned rewards in a calendar page that is buried 3 links down from the home page is not user-friendly. It should be a simple tweak to bring this information to the top rewards page so that available rewards are listed with corresponding expiration dates.

 The smartphone app should also call out rewards that are about to expire as soon as it is accessed instead of making us have to click on rewards and scroll down through all the activity to find earned rewards and expiration dates.

betterbefore

11/10/2012 7:05 AM

Another aspect of alll this.....in my experinece......is that about half the time I go to my rewards, the calendars are totally blank....(when I've already seen how many 'rewards' I earned for that mnth the day before),

and even say you have ZERO rewards, and/or   zero stars this mnth.   I
realize this must be in the middle of some update-process but still, I
think Sbux could do better. should do better.

---

sbx_bean

12/17/2012 10:39 AM

Thanks for sharing your ideas with us. Since this idea was posted, we've made
some updates to the Rewards notifications. You receive an email when you
earn a reward, you can see your reward details on the Starbucks mobile app,
and we've added a dashboard to Starbucks.com to view your reward status.

**http://blogs.starbucks.com/blogs/customer/archive/2012/11/06/a-quick-
peek-at-your-rewards.aspx**

Hide Comments [15]

Corporate Information   **Online Community**   **Quick Links**   **Powered By:**

About Us   Twitter   Store Finder
Jobs   Facebook   Nutrition Info
Press Room   YouTube   Customer Service
Investor Relations   Flickr   StarbucksStore.com
Contact Us   Starbucks™ Shared Planet™
                                                       STARBUCKS(RED)
                                                       FAQ

© 2010 Starbucks Corporation. All rights reserved.   **Terms of Use**   **Privacy Policies**

16.5 Appendix 5 – Interview Guide

Focus Areas	Research Questions	Interview Questions
Social Media	What do customers think of social media, and how do the customers use it?	- What do you think about social media? - Do you use social media? - What are the most positive/negative things to you of using social media?
	What do customers think about companies' use of social media?	- What do you think about companies which are using social media? - Why do you think companies use social media? - What do you think companies gain from using social media?
Identity/Image	How are customers' perceptions of companies affected by the companies' actions and interactions with users in social media?	- Can the way a company uses social media change your view of the company? - Which acts/contents from a company in social media could change your view of the company in a positive/negative way? - Which things/contents do you think companies should focus on in social media in relation to the users who are interested in the companies? - How do you think companies should act in social media to the users who follow/have interest in the companies? - What do you think about a company if it does/does not participate in the online discussion with its users? - In social media would you personally prefer that companies participate in discussions or leave the discussion between the users? - What do you think about Starbucks using many different types of social media?
		- Does the way Starbucks write to its users in social media affect your perception of Starbucks? - In which way will your perception of Starbucks become more positive/negative

		from the way Starbucks writes to its users in social media?
Communication	In which way are customers' perceptions of Starbucks affected by the way the company communicates in social media?	- What do you think about the content which Starbucks writes about to its users in social media? * - What do you think about the way Starbucks writes to its users in social media?* - In social media what do you think if Starbucks writes to the users in a certain way to inform them? - In social media what do you think if Starbucks writes in a certain way to influence the users to act/think in a specific way? - In social media what do you think if Starbucks writes in a certain way to create discussion between the users? - From what we have talked about and the examples I have shown you about the way Starbucks writes to its users and the content that is written about – is your view of Starbucks unchanged or has it become better/worse?

* The interviewee is shown examples of Starbucks' way of communicating with users in social media.

16.6 Appendix 6 – Interview Transcriptions and Summaries

Transcription of Interview 1 - Margit

<u>**Social Media**</u>

What do you think about social media? 0: I think they are very useful. You need them in many ways.

How do you use social media? 0: Well, I use them for corresponding with friends, family and to follow websites.

Why do you do that? Is it easier than to visit them? 1: It is easier to be updated about some things and follow what is going on in sports clubs or the family or with friends.

Are there any negative things about using social media? 1: Not really but as it is so fast, you sometimes need to think before you press the button for mails for example.

What do you think are the most positive things? 1-2: That is the quick way you can communicate with through mails or stay updated about website or if you need to search for information.

In connection with companies which use social media, what do you think about that? 2: Well, it is natural that companies also communicate in this way.

Are there any good things about it to you? That you can get in contact with companies? 2-3: Well, it is more that you are in front of the computer and can contact a company. You do not have to start the car and drive there to knock on the door at the company. You can have a direct correspondence.

<u>**Identity/Image**</u>

Do you think the way a company uses social media can change the way you perceive the actual company in a positive or negative direction. Is there anything that the company does online which you would perceive negatively? 3: I do not know.

What about positively? It may be that some of the things they do will make you think more positively about the company? Can you imagine that? 4: Well, in some way I can imagine that it may give me a more positive image of a company because they share good things such as about their products.

Could there be other things than products or do you think products are the most important? 4-5: Yes, because that is mostly what you notice, a company's products and what they sell. But of course it may also be an opinion which a company has, which it may express in that way.

Do you think companies should focus on specific things in relation to the things the users are interested in or should they also try to express their own messages? 5-6: I think it should be a bit of both. Of course

the company needs to come out with its products, but they can be attentive and have some idea about what potential customers think, say and have an opinion about.

Do you think it matters to those who use social media that the company is concerned with them? 6: I think so a bit. Actually I think so.

What do you think about the company if it participates in the discussion that takes place between the users? Is it a good or a bad thing? 7: Well, that can only be a good thing, I mean, that there is a dialogue between a customer and a company so you can get to the products which customers want.

Then what do you think about the company if it does not participate in the discussion that is taking place, but instead remains in the background and leaves the discussion to the users? 8: Well, I think that would be a bit wrong, it is like they are a bit uninterested in the customer's opinion. They are too passive. So it should not only be the users who have a dialogue with each other, but the company should also have a dialogue with possible customers.

So, personally you prefer that the company is involved in the dialogue? 8: Yes.

Communication

In relation to Starbucks, can the way the company communicates with and writes to its users on affect your view on Starbucks? 9: Actually I think it can. If you read about Starbucks, that is one thing, but then when you visit the place you will see how it is, and then you will be able to form an opinion about how it is.

On Facebook you can see four different things Starbucks has posted. What do you think when you see the photos and the text? Is it positive or negative? 11: Well I think it looks positive.

In which way? 12: Well it is very conspicuous, and you think that this is something that makes you happy. I mean, it is not something which is offensive or something, but you think they are nice photos and you get curious to see what they say. And nice colours in two of them.

What do you think about the content here (Starbucks blog)? There is something about social responsibility, some new changes to a membership programme, a message from the CEO to the employees, and something about a new product. What do you think about the content is concerned with different themes? 13-14: Well, this one [CB1], this is the product they want to show with photos and text. That is quite common.

Then what do you think, is it positive or negative that they also talk about other things? 13-14: Yes because they could just focus on a new product and photos of it, but that they also write about social

responsibility and consider where the raw materials come from and how those who pick the berries are feeling. If they think about those things, then that is just really positive.

And you think it is fine if they tell about that? 14: Yes, I do, and I think it is good that they tell about it by themselves. I mean, you can say that some customers might ask about these things, and then it is good that they have already written about it beforehand.

Do you think it is targeted one specific target group only or could there be others? 15: Well, I do not have time to read what they write about but I think that it is really good that they write about things, such as the CEO who addresses the employees, and not only addresses the customers. They inform their employees too, and I think that is positive.

I would like you to look at these examples from the forum to show you how Starbucks has responded to its customers or users. Do you think they answer in a positive or negative way or neither? 16: Well this one [IF3,6] I think is a very short answer. They say we have heard what you say, and then we will wait for others to comment, and that is pretty much it I think.

How about the way it has been written, is the person being personal or impersonal? 17: That is what I think, he is being impersonal, and I think it is a short answer. There is not much in it except that they say they have heard their opinion and that they will await others' comments. I think something is missing.

On the next page there is another answer from them [IF3,19]: 18: Well this is better because now they have accepted the idea and saying that they will work on it and return with news later. Even though it is a short answer it seems better than the previous one [IF3,6].

What do you think about this comment [IF4,15]? 20: Well I actually think it is a good answer.

In which way? 20: First, they thank for the interest and they also say that they have made some changes. And then you can also see it in Starbucks' applications. So, you get the possibility to go there and see what is going on. So I think it is a good answer actually.

In some of their other forum threads there are no answers from Starbucks. What do you think about that? 21-22: Most people who express their opinions about things probably also expect answers I think. Maybe there has to be many comments from different people before they answer, and they cannot answer every time. But it is like you expect that they will collect the answers and respond sometime. I think I would expect that.

Based on these different ways they have answered what do you think about Starbucks if they write to the users in a specific way to inform them about things? It could be about products or charity. Do you think this is good or bad that they try to inform people about those things? 23: Yes I think it is good that they want to because I think you expect them to do that. At least it would give me a more positive image or impression of them if they do more but also answer.

Then, what if they try to write to the users in a specific way to affect them and perhaps change their actions or their perceptions of Starbucks. Is that positive or negative? 23-24: Both, because often I think you can see through that now they are trying to change my view on something. I do not find that negative if they do that because you can kind of see through it. And you are probably influenced 100%. So I cannot say it is either positive or negative.

Do you think there is anything good or bad about them trying to affect the users? 25: Well, to try and affect them to buy a product/new product is something everyone does so that is not new or wrong. People need to think for themselves and not be affected. So I do not see anything wrong in that.

Then, what do you think about Starbucks trying to create discussion between the users in the way they write. Is that a good idea? 25-26: I think that is okay because people can just decide not to participate in the discussion, but when they do it is because they want to start a discussion and that creates attention. So that is of course why they do it but also to change products at some point. But I think it is okay.

Would this contribute to both the users and the company? 26: Yes I think that would benefit everyone, that they are open in that way, and also, when you as a user of their products is able to express your opinion if you need to. Then I think it is okay.

Based on the things we have talked about and the examples you have seen about how Starbucks writes to the users and the content which is written about – is your view on Starbucks unchanged or has it become better or worse? 27: I think it is kind of unchanged; at least it has not become worse. Well, I find it positive that they have a dialogue in different media with the customers. So I think it is a positive impression.

Summary of Interview not Used in Analysis

In the interview Margit also says that she does not believe there is anything bad about companies' use of social media. She thinks it is positive that Starbucks uses many different types of social media, and she finds it natural and necessary for anyone who wants to reach as many people as possible in order to express their opinions and messages. She does not think there are any disadvantages of using many different types of social media but perceive it as an advantage.

Personally, she does not like that employees express their own opinions, at least not in a too obvious way. She thinks that some of the comments by Starbucks in the blog examples primarily stop the discussion as the company informs the users that their opinions have been heard and the ideas will be considered regarding implementation.

Transcription of Interview 2 - Martin

<u>**Social Media**</u>

What do you think about social media? 0: Well, I think it is okay, you can reach everyone in that way. It is good also for companies, which can use social media to reach people.

In which way do you use social media? 0: I pretty much only use Facebook.

Is it to get into contact with or read about other people? 1: Well it is possible to like things on Facebook. Personally, I am interested in football and then I participate in some debate sites, and in that way it is possible to get in touch with others and discuss things.

What do you think about companies which use social media, is it a good or bad thing? 2-3: Well, I guess it is fine. It is a good way for them to reach people. For example Facebook, probably 8 out of 10 have that. It is possible to reach all kinds of people through that and with advertisements in the side. Whether it is good or bad, I am not really sure about.

Why do you think companies use social media? 3: That is to reach those they want to reach. I think it has something to with narrowing down the people they want to reach and search on them to know what they like and who likes the company.

So you think it makes it easier for the companies to get in contact with their customers? 4: Yeah in that way they can close in on them. They can find those who find it interesting.

<u>**Identity/Image**</u>

Do you think the way a company uses social media can change your view on the specific company? 5: No I do not think so.

It does not necessarily have to be negative but could also be positive. 6: No I do not really think it can change my view that much. Of course I would be able to see that there is something they want to sell or launch which I think is really good and maybe want to buy. That appeals to me and in that way I guess it is positive.

How do you think companies should act towards the users who follow them in social media? 6: Informative.

Should the companies stay in the background and let the users discuss or should they be a part of the discussion? 7: Both things. They should allow people to express themselves but should also participate and argue for their opinions and products. They can do that. I do not find that a problem at all.

What do you think about the companies which participate in the discussion? Do you think that is positive? 7: Yes to some degree. Primarily, they should listen to what the customers want, but I also think it is good that they ask questions and interfere a bit but not too much. It should be a balance they need to find themselves.

What if the company decides not to participate in the discussion, but that the users are responsible for discussing? What do you think about that, and what does it tell you about the company? 8: Well, they may seem less interested, but I think it is okay that they remain in the background and listen to what the customer want. I also think it is fine if they answer any questions.

So it could be a help to the users? 8: Yes. But overall they should not be saying that we do not want this or that and express their own personal opinions.

Why not? 8: They should never doubt the customer. The customer is always right.

You mention it yourself, but what if the person at the company is personal? 9: That is not right at all and would seem wrong. I believe they should focus on any questions or facts.

Communication

The way Starbucks writes to its customers in social media, can this affect your view on Starbucks? 10: Well, again this has to do with Starbucks which have to remain neutral and not share their own opinions.

If they wrote positive things to you on the Facebook page or in a negative way, how would that affect you? 11: I would feel that they listened to me for example if I had a suggestion and of course I would be happy for that but if it is negative it is not so good.

On Facebook, what do you think about the photos and the text? Is it positive or negative? 12-13: That is positive. There are photos for those who like coffee. Then people are able to respond to that. They fool around and I think that is positive. It is possible to chat with others who like coffee.

In the blog, what do you think about the things they write about? 13-14: Well, I think it is good if they write in the blog about the new product. I think it is good that people can read it and comment on it. Also about new changes to a membership programme as I can see. It is good and it is people who are interested in Starbucks and how they do business and how they write to their employees. It is good to see that the CEO is present and communicates to the employees, and also something about how they treat the employees.

So you think it is good they write about different things? 14: Yes that is fine.

What do you think if Starbucks writes in order to inform the customers, and the way they write to inform them? Is that okay if they write to inform them? 15: Yes I think it is okay. I think people should be able to know about the things they buy, how it is made, and how the employees are treated, but they should also be able to listen to what people say about them to get an idea about how the customers feel about them and their products so they can make changes. So I think that is okay.

What do you think if Starbucks writes in a way to affect those who are reading and this could both be positive and negative? What do you think about this? This could be to affect your perception of the company of affect you to buy products. 16: Well that happens everywhere and you cannot really avoid that companies try to affect customers to buy their things. But to influence my perception of Starbucks I do not think is possible.

What do you think if Starbucks tries to create discussions between the users, is that good or bad? 17: Well that depends on what it is about but now it is primarily coffee. So that is taste and variants and what they can do to improve the Starbucks shops. I guess that is what is being discussed about. But I think that is good as it helps for improvement. But if they start to write negatively it is not good.

They are writing about things such as social responsibility. Is it okay that they write about that too? 17: Yes I think it is good that they can see things are done correctly and where the employees work. I think that is fine.

Based on the things we have talked about and what I have shown you about Starbucks, did that change your view on Starbucks in a positive or negative way or maybe not at all? 18: I do not think it has changed much really. I find it positive that they have divided their social media. On Facebook it is more about fun and funny photos, and people can talk together. The blog is more informative and you are told how things work.

Another thing was the forum, how do you think about the way Starbucks respond the users? 19: It seems neutral and constructive in their feedback. If someone has an idea, they write that it sounds good and let us see what the others will say about it and know if they think it is a good idea. I think that is fine. They do not say any of them are bad ideas.

Do you think they try to start a discussion? 19: Yes.

A Starbucks employee shares his/her own opinion, what do you think about that? 20: I guess it is okay. There should be room for everyone's opinions, and if an employee expresses an opinion I guess that is fine.

Summary of Interview not Used in Analysis

In the interview Martin also says that he uses social media but primarily only Facebook. He thinks that social media is good as it makes it easier to get in contact with others especially for people who maybe have problems with being social in real life. Thereby, it is easier for them to create friendships and find the things they are looking for through social media.

In connection with companies' use of social media to reach new customers, he refers to one of his friends who use Facebook to identify possible customers for his own company. Martin also says that Starbucks' use of many different types of social media is okay but he does not know if there are any advantages or disadvantages to it.

Transcription of Interview 3 - Frank

<u>Social Media</u>

What do you think about social media? 0: Well, I think social media is a really good thing, and definitely something that will stay around us. It is more or less the way everything is going through.

In connection with companies which use social media what do you think about that? 1: Well I think it is okay and it is advertising for everything. Instead of the advertisement in a newspaper, it is more online, and this is definitely the way things will go with communication.

Why do you think companies use social media? 2-3: Because that is very things take place and where network communication is. It is the place where people are, and almost no one do not have a mobile phone and know about the internet. So of course they are also there with advertisements and focus.

What do you think companies gain from using social media? 3: They gain a lot from it because if they are not there then they will fall behind their competitors.

In which way? 3: You will not be seen. If you are not in social media I will not discover people.

<u>Identity/Image</u>

Can the way a company uses social media, such as the way it writes to users, can it affect your view on the company positively or negatively? 3-4: Well, I am sure that is possible. Perhaps if something was written which I found too arrogant, then maybe I would not choose it. And on the contrary, if it is something that I did not find interesting before but would now then I would be curious. So it is both ways I think.

How do you think companies should act towards the users in social media? Should they be accommodating and participate in discussions or should they remain in the background and let the users discuss? 4: Both I would say. I mean of course they should put things out and make people curious, but it should not be them who are in control. I definitely think that the users should be allowed to discuss with each other but also suggest good ideas

What do you think about a company if it participates in the online discussion? 5: I think that depends on the subject, but again it should be a balance. They should participate but only if it is relevant and not only to get a bigger audience. To some degree it is okay that they participate but they should not take control.

If the company does not participate, then what would you think about the company if it just decided to remain in the background? 6: Well, if the forum and chat are active then there is probably no reason for

them to participate, but if something is inactive and they do not encourage activity and input then I would probably leave it if they did not appear interesting.

In social media, would you personally prefer that companies actively participate in the discussions or should they remain in the background? 6-7: I think I would say that they should remain in the background. If the users are active then they should primarily be responsible. Then, sometimes they can add some input.

What do you think about Starbucks being present in many different types of social media? Is it good or bad? 7-8: Offhand, I think it is fine, but it does not mean much to me. It is okay that they out there and are curious and try to find out which of the social media are best. It is difficult to say without testing.

<u>Communication</u>

Can the way Starbucks writes to its users in social media affect your view on Starbucks? 8: It can if their way of marketing themselves is not interesting to me then I can leave it, but if they advertise in a way I find interesting then I am ready.

Personally, are there any things you would think Starbucks should write about which could make your perception better? 9: Well, Starbucks is about coffee and I like coffee so it would be some kind of story about how the coffee was made or especially if there are new products. Then they would make me interested.

Could other things than the product be interesting? 9: Yes definitely. For example, if they develop themselves outside the coffee world, such as new initiatives or ways of doing things, that would be interesting to me.

What do you think about the content you see here from the blog? 10: I think there is much text.

What about the things they write about? There is something about a new product, social responsibility, the CEO has a message to the employees, and something about a new membership programme. 10-11: Posting about a new product is good so people can see it and read about it, but I think it is fine to use the blog in that way so people can comment on it and gain something in that way. Regarding social responsibility, then of course there is an opinion about that. Social responsibility is necessary I think, and it is fine that they use the blog to get some feedback.

If we look at the Facebook examples, then what do you think about the content, the photos and the text? 12-13: I think the first one [FB1] is a fine way to communicate it on. Post it and get some response on it

regardless if it is comments or likes. It is useful to them, and I think it is perfectly okay. A simple question and a nice photo make good sense to me.

Then, I would like to show you examples from Starbucks' idea forum, and I would like to know what you think about the way they write to the users? Is it a good way to write or a bad way? 14-15: Well, actually I think it is a fine way they communicate on. They are not interfering much in the discussion but allow the users to express their opinions. Sometimes they say we are looking into an idea and we will return later with a response. So I think it is communicated well.

What do you think about Starbucks in social media if they write to the users in a way to inform them about different things? 17: Information is good to some degree but too much information is not so good. I think it depends on the specific situation. Information about new products and initiatives is fine.

What could be bad about only focusing on informing people? 17: That would be if it was too time-consuming and there was too much information about very specific things. It is okay to keep it general.

What if Starbucks decided to focus more on affecting the readers, how would you feel about that such as if they affected them to do specific things or have specific opinions? This could both be positive and negative? 18: It is a balance. Obviously, Starbucks have this because they want to sell some products and have a lot of users and focus on their products/advertising. Of course they should be aggressive, but also allow people to express their own opinions.

What if Starbucks focuses more on creating discussions between the users? Is that a good thing or a bad thing? 19: That is a bit tricky. It is okay to some degree, and that they initiate some discussion between the users. As long as it is positive and keep the products as the focus and leave out personal issues. The focus should be on the product and development. So I think it is fine.

Based on the things we have talked about and the examples you have seen about how they write to their users has this changed your view on Starbucks positively or negatively or is it unchanged? 20: Well, I would say it is unchanged, perhaps a bit more positive. The way the forum is used and the way things are posted is positive to me. The Facebook part has some positive things with simple questions which users can comment on or show that they like is fine to me as they get some feedback. However, personal comments are unnecessary.

Summary of Interview not Used in Analysis

In the interview Frank also says that he uses social media but primarily Facebook as it helps him to be online in order to know what other people are doing and to search for information such as through Google. He only thinks there is one disadvantage about social media which is that it is very time-consuming. He does not find it negative that Starbucks is using different types of social media.

In connection with the blog, Frank finds it positive that Starbucks writes about various topics but that it is uninteresting to him. Reading about the CEO's message to the employees is not interesting to him, but he would be more likely to read about the product and the story of social responsibility.

In the forum, he comments on the employee who expresses his/her personal opinion and says that any employee should always support the company's opinion. It is okay to have a personal opinion but it is probably not a good idea to express it in a forum like this as the focus should be on the company. He also mentions that he thinks some of the comments by Starbucks employees end the discussion in the forum threads by saying the ideas are being considered by Starbucks. However, the personal opinion by one employee is perhaps more likely to make the discussion continue.

Transcription of Interview 4 - Camilla

<u>**Social Media**</u>

What do you think about social media? 0: Hmm, social media. I guess it is fine. It is not something I have thought much about. But I do use Facebook a lot.

What is good about using social media? 0: For myself it is mainly to stay updated I guess and communicate with others.

What do you think about companies using social media? 1: Well, it depends on what it is about. In relation to Starbucks it is very good for them and for one like me who can follow the company or just comment on things.

Why do you think companies use social media? 1-2: Because they are so popular and they can reach many people with their messages.

What do you think the companies gain from using social media? 2: Well, that is the possibility of communicating their messages and information or advertising, and that is done in the best way by using things that many other people also use and follow and comment on, etc. Then they can optimise their products in the best way.

<u>**Identity/Image**</u>

Are there any ways a company uses social media which can change your perception of the company? It could be both in a positive or negative way? 2: Hmm, I do not know really. There are not things that directly have offended me.

What could be positive about a company's use of social media? 3: To me, it is that I can follow what is going on a bit. It could be funny photos or comments. Starbucks is also a very good memory for me and a friend who was travelling and went to Starbucks every day.

Is there anything that a company could do in social media which could change your view on the company in a good or bad way? 4: Hmm, no not really I guess. But maybe if campaigns or advertisements are poor and could be improved and do not really reach as many people as possible such as their target group. But I am not really sure.

How do you think companies should act in social media? Should they be very active and participate or remain in the background? 6: Well, I think it is fine if they are active and are concerned with the interests of the users. They show that they use these means to reach people but also receive the criticism they get and use it for something.

What do you think that shows about the company if it participates actively? 6: That they are interested in their customers and target group and want to hear their opinions, and know what is good and bad so they can improve themselves. And I only think that happens if they are active.

And if they do not participate in the discussion what image does it show of the company? 7-8: I think it shows that they are not interested. Of course they are interested in knowing what the customers want but they do not consider it as well. Like they just want some advertising and show we are here. I think it is much better to the customers and shows credibility that they take advantage of the media and listen to people.

What do you think about Starbucks being on many different types of social media? Is it good or bad? 9: Well, Starbucks is huge so I guess they have enough people to handle it, and then I think it is fine. I guess it works if they do it. As long as it works it is fine with me. You can see people are interested and look at it. It would be different if there were no visitors in social media then it would be a bit useless. As long as they are active and people are interested I find it positive.

<u>Communication</u>

How about the way Starbucks writes to its customers, can that affect your view on Starbucks? In general, would it have any influence? 10-11: Well, I do not know really. Because I really like Starbucks I guess there is not so much negative but I have not looked at their advertising. As long as I know their products and like them then I do not think anything will offend me.

I would like to show you some examples of Starbucks' social media, from Facebook and the blog. What do you think about the content they write about? Facebook first, what do you think about the things they have posted? Is it positive or negative? 11-12: Well, this one [FB2], I do not really understand it and makes me think what can I use it for. When I look at this one [FB1] it makes me think of Central Park where I was sitting and makes me think back and think of memories, and actually also this one [FB3]. It is very funny with 'one more round' because I could take another round with this, and it reminds me of London Eye. The last one [FB4], after I read it, I agree with. So every day should be a coffee day, at Starbucks.

Overall, then what do you think about the things they have written, are they positive to you or negative? 14: Well, it is not negative but I do not know if I find it very positive. But it is very short and expressive for example 'one more round' and a Ferris wheel. I find that very funny.

If we look at the blog, then there are different topics they are talking about. Something with products, social responsibility, a message from the CEO to the employees, and some changes to a membership

programme. What is your opinion that they write about different topics? 15: I think that is fine, actually I think it is very good. Especially as everyone can go there and look and if you are interested you can follow them and read about what is going on in the company. I think it is very good that they keep the customers updated about what is going on.

So it is good that they focus on not only the product? 15-16: Yes I think it is good that everyone can see what is going on but also this one with the message from the CEO to the employees. Maybe they should send it privately or actually it is a fine idea, and shows how things are working. I think it is very good that they show it is a serious but also good company which is concerned with customers and employees. I think it is good, and actually other companies could do the same instead of only focusing on the products.

The next thing is from Starbucks' forum in which the employees have commented on different things. What do you think about the way they write to the users? Is there anything positive or negative? 16-18: Well these two [IF2 + IF4] seem very formal but it is fine that they comment on them and tell the users that they will consider them. It is formal because it more to the point and like an auto-response compared to this one [IF3]. But I think it seems like they are interested in what the customers say and the ideas. But that they will inform the users about the ideas and that they comment on the users' ideas work well.

What do you think about the employee who expresses his/her own personal opinion? 18: Well, if the person shares his own opinion then maybe it will make others comment. But I do not think it has the most influence.

So, overall it works for you? 20: Well yes to me it is not a problem that they write in that way, and actually it works well I think though I have not seen all of them. I do not know if they always write in a positive way but if they did not then maybe I would think they should change their attitude a bit.

For example in the blog, there are not many answers from Starbucks. What do you think about that? 20-22: Well, that is a pity that they do not have anyone to do that. But it is like this is where they have expressed some story or update and they have said what they wanted to and then people can comment if they want to. But I think it is a pity if they do not comment on anything but I do not think they should be as active as here (Facebook and forum) because they have already expressed what they wanted to. Here (Facebook and forum) it is the purpose to use it to allow people to express themselves in connection with products. The blog is more like an information page while the forum and Facebook lets people comment and more works as two-way communication. But yes, they could be more active

but not to the same extent. It is okay if they add something but only if the users need something because they cannot respond to everyone.

What do you think about Starbucks in social media if they write in a way to inform the users? Is that good or bad? 22-23: Yes I think that is good such as with the blog, that they write about different things and that people are able to follow them if they are interested. I only find it positive that people are able to do that.

How about if Starbucks writes in a way to affect the users both positively and negatively to affect their actions or perceptions of Starbucks? 23-24: I think it is okay to affect their actions regarding selling more because that it was you expect. However, if they want some response to something then they should not affect them in some direction but more let them share advantages/disadvantages and express the central things. But regarding selling then I think it is okay because that is what they live from. You cannot really do much about it.

How about if they write in a way to create discussion between the users? 24: Well I think that it is a good thing for Starbucks because they can start a debate about their products and initiatives which can help them to develop. This is definitely good for the company to know these things.

Based on the things we have talked about and the examples you have seen about how they write to the users and the things they write about, how have this affected your view on Starbucks? Is it positive or negative or unchanged? 26-28: Well I do not think that much can affect me to think Starbucks is a bad company. But I have become positively surprised to know about the blog and I think it is great that they tell about what is going on in the company. And I also find it positive that when they have made an idea forum, then they also follow up occasionally rather than remain passive. They say they will consider the things and encourage the users to continue voting and commenting. So, I think they show me that they do something continuously to optimise the company. In that way I think it has changed it to become even more positive.

Summary of Interview not Used in Analysis

In the interview, Camilla says that the most negative thing about social media is the time it consumes. All types of social media are also not good such as regarding companies which want to hire people and use social media, such as Facebook, to find information about people, and on Facebook they would probably not get a good first-hand impression.

Personally, she prefers that companies are active in discussions as it shows interest in the users rather than only focusing on sales. She also thinks that Starbucks' use of communication to create discussions is good as long as the forum are not used on discussing things that are not important and thus draws the focus away from more important and constructive issues.

In general, she prefers Starbucks to other coffee companies. Some reasons for this are that it is more hyped, have better menus, and she also mentions the price level as important when she was travelling abroad.

16.7 Appendix 7 – Interview Audio Files

The four audio files from the interviews can be found on the cd which is enclosed with the thesis.