

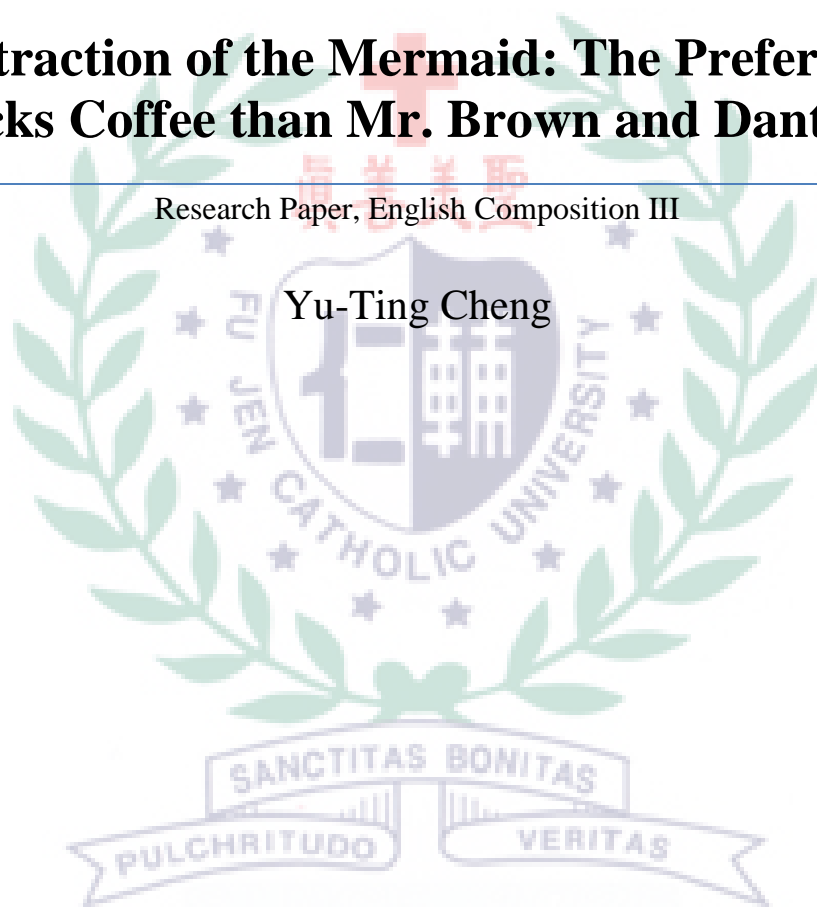
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATION PROJECT 2016

# **The Attraction of the Mermaid: The Preference for Starbucks Coffee than Mr. Brown and Dante Coffee**

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Research Paper, English Composition III

Yu-Ting Cheng



Cheng, Yu-Ting  
CC III, Section A  
Professor Yang  
24 June 2015

The Attraction of the Mermaid: The Preference for Starbucks Coffee than Mr. Brown and Dante  
Coffee

In 1971, the first Starbucks was open with just a small single store in Seattle's Pike Place Market by three partners, Jerry Baldwin, Zev Siegl, and Gordon Bowker. However, things started to change in 1980s when Howard Schultz, Starbucks present chairman, president and chief executive officer, appeared in Starbucks because he had turned the original Starbucks store which sold only coffee beans and coffee making equipment into a coffee bar that sells different kinds of drinks and pastries ("History"). He joined Starbucks in 1982, a year later when he traveled to Italy, he fell in love with Italian coffee bars and the alluring coffee atmosphere and decided to bring the experience back to the United States. He wanted to turn Starbucks into customers' "third place between work and home" ("Starbucks"). He then opened his own coffee shop and bought Starbucks in 1987. Under the management of Howard, Starbucks became a unique company that does not only put emphasis on the coffee and tradition, but also a feeling of connection between the partners, customers, and the community.

In the early period, the coffee culture in Taiwan was deeply influenced by Japanese culture, such as using the tradition vacuum coffee maker or taking orders from the tables, etc (Yang). It was not until 1997 when Starbucks first entered the market in Taiwan that changed local people's perspective toward the original coffee drinking habits. According to Mr. Yang Wei-Cheng , Starbucks was considered to be one of the earliest coffee brand which came into Taiwan's market. Selling espresso-based coffee or taking orders from the registers are all the features that were never met by the local people; therefore, becoming the attractions to them. The brand that came from western country with a more expensive price for each drink has unconsciously turn itself into a high-class brand for Taiwanese. It was also during those years that Starbucks has successfully established the coffee market in Taiwan. Yang has made an additional remark by saying that "even the people who do not drink coffee will come to the shop to buy a cup of Frappuccino."

However, before becoming one of the "Partner," the employee who works in Starbucks,

times of going there for a drink could be said to be very less due to the high prices. After started to work there, the numbers of their customers surprises me. In my store each day, there are about 400 customers coming in to buy drinks or food. For a simple breakfast, they can spend more than NT\$200, thus, I suddenly want to know the reasons why so many people are willing to spend so much money to consume in Starbucks. Is there anything special in Starbucks, comparing to the local chain coffee shops? This is the purpose of doing this project.

As for the significance of doing this project is to find out the reasons why Starbucks can be so successful, the people who want to operate the similar business can know and try to learn from their strategies in order to become one of the successful stores too.

Starbucks' success can be seen around the world. It is the world's largest chain coffee shop that has more than 21000 retail stores in 66 countries around the world ("Starbucks"). There are a lot of research papers about how Starbucks is able to become such a successful chain coffee shop and the reasons that make Starbucks unique from the others. According to Emma Klein, she has classified the reasons into five main focuses- coffee, partners, customers, environment of the stores, and the neighborhood. The quality of its drinks is always the priority of Starbucks. It insists using the finest coffee beans to produce the best coffee for customers. "Starbucks coffee buyers take time to travel to farms in Latin America, Africa, and Asia to make sure that only the highest quality coffee beans are being selected (Klein 3)." Next, their employees always regard Starbucks as their second home; therefore, they are all willing to work with a positive attitude. Customer is also another major focus. Klein states that every customer's experience in Starbucks is special and their connection with the partners is all different; therefore, they can easily feel that they are being respected and their requests are always to be satisfied. The environment of Starbucks store also gives customers a sense of belonging. Starbucks' employees hope to create a third place for customers to relax and do the things they like. Starbucks also takes good care of the neighborhood. They frequently participates in different kinds of community services projects, such as Surfers for Autism, food bank, cleaning shelters, and so on.

In the United States, Starbucks dominates the chain coffee shop industry. A research done by Kioumars Paryani focuses on the perspective of people in Michigan has towards Starbucks shares some same ideas as Klein. In Paryani's paper, she mentioned that the coffee, the baristas, and the Starbucks experience are the main reasons why customers love Starbucks. The coffee products Starbucks uses are "dark roasted coffee made from high-quality gourmet coffee beans

grown in developing countries” (Paryani 7). In order to provide the best quality of coffee beans and drinks for customers, they have to effectively manage its own supply chain. They also put a lot of effort when making a cup of coffee. Besides the quality of coffee, services are also important. Paryani has stated the promise Starbucks has made, “Your drink should be perfect, every time. If not, let us know and we will make it right” (9). Therefore, if any customer gets the drink that does not meet their satisfaction, they can tell the baristas and the drink will be made until they are happy with it. Starbucks also provides all kinds of customization, as long as it is reasonable. Asking the names of customers is also one of the good services since it creates a feeling that they are important, instead of being just a business. The last point she has discussed in the paper is the Starbucks experience. Starbucks makes itself a “third” place for customers to get away from daily hectic and enjoy a cup of coffee while doing their own things. Therefore, the environment is designed to create a relaxing atmosphere with comfortable seats and clean surrounding.

Similarly, Starbucks in China has also successfully become the most important chain coffee shop. Take Guangzhou as an instance, a study done by Angeles and her group members has found out the main reasons why Starbucks can gain such a high reputation. In the report, they said that the main reason why customers like to go there is because of the environment. It is a nice and comfortable place to gather. Mr. Guo, their interviewee, said that he “come[s] here because of the environment rather than the coffee. It makes people feel comfortable” (Angeles 11). Before Starbucks entered China, there were not a lot of coffee shops around since tea culture was put more emphasis. Therefore, when Starbucks was first launched, many people found it new and special, so willing to give it a try. Besides, they also appreciate the combination of the products with local tastes, selling “pastries like green tea flavored cheesecake and Chinese moon cakes” (Angeles 11).

India is another example of a country having Starbucks as the most popular chain coffee shop. According to Poojari and his group members’ research, Starbucks’ success in India depends on retail expansion, relaxing environment, and service innovation. Starbucks often opens new stores in big cities, shopping malls, or in the open area where the locations often have enormous business potential. Starbucks also provides a place for people to relax and enjoy with others. Many Indians think that Starbucks “make the public feel as if they are right at home in their own living room where they can socialize in a comfortable atmosphere with comfortable furniture,

and up to date books and magazines (Poojari et al. 48).” Furthermore, Starbucks is also a customer friendly firm. It trains its employees to provide positive customer services in order to create a large base of loyal customers.

In further support of the last point, a customer friendly firm, mentioned from previous journal have mentioned, Holt in his article has mentioned that Starbucks uses Consumer Cultural Theory<sup>1</sup> to operate the business. Starbucks has developed a corporate culture<sup>2</sup> and made their brand both interior and exterior. This culture is supported by every employee that works for them, thus, creating a brand that people want to consume in Starbucks. He has also pointed out one of Starbucks’ principles, “To provide a great work environment and treat each other with respect and dignity” (Holt 1). With such a respectful and positive work environment between partners, employees feel a sense of meaning to their work even it is just pouring a cup of coffee, what is more, customers can also feel the delightful atmosphere, thus, attracting all different types of consumers to come (Holt). It is a direct consequence of the use of CCT.

After reading these articles, the primary purpose of this research is to find out the reasons why Starbucks has the highest preference among the chain coffee shops in Taiwan. To achieve this purpose, this research compares Starbucks to two local chain coffee shops- Mr. Brown, which sells eleven more drink items regularly (“Introduction”; “Our”), and Dante, which all the drinks have cheaper prices (“Product”; “Our”), through the results of the survey to see the customers’ perception and experiences.

Based on the research question for this study, a hypothesis is developed: the top three reasons why Starbucks can be the key enterprise of the chain coffee shop industry are due to the good services provided by baristas, and comfortable environment, and good qualities of drinks. Mainly because of these three reasons that even with higher prices and lesser items for the drinks regularly, it will not stop customers from consuming.

In order to find out the reasons, a survey was designed and distributed to 100 participants in total. The questionnaires can be divided into two parts- the basic information of the participants and their preference for the chain coffee shop with reasons, and their familiarity with the activities hold in Starbucks.

Among my 100 respondents, females take up the majority which is about 72 people, and 28 people are males (see fig. 1). As for the age, there are four groups which range from 15 to above 40 years old. Most of my respondents are between 20 to 30 years old, followed by the second

highest age group which is older than 40 years old (see fig. 2). As for their career, since I purposely distributed the survey out to 50 college students and 50 working adults in order to see if there is a different preference among the two groups; therefore, 50 of them are students and 50 of them are working under different industries with the highest percentage under the service industry (see fig. 3). When it comes to the salary received each month, the options are divided into four as well and most of my participants have salary between 0 to NT\$10000, which takes up to 40 people. The second highest is having the salary more than NT\$30000, which has 36 people (see fig. 4).



Fig 1: Numbers of Males and Females respondents

Fig 2: Numbers of different age group of my respondents

Fig 3: Numbers of students and people at work of my respondents

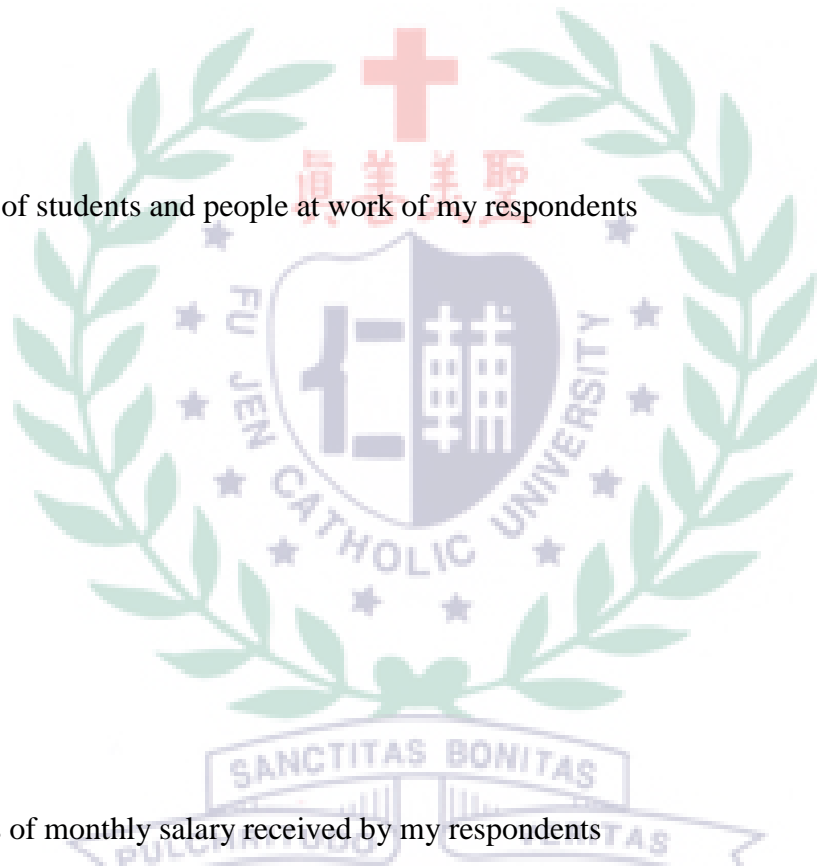


Fig. 4: Numbers of monthly salary received by my respondents

After showing the results of the first part of the questionnaire, the second part is about their preference for the chain coffee shop when the three are all in the same area and the reasons for their decision. From fig. 5, it clearly shows that there are more people prefer going to Starbucks than the other two coffee shops. Among my 100 participants, there are only 15 people who choose Dante Coffee to go to, 16 people choose Mr. Brown to go to, and 69 people prefer going to Starbucks, which makes it the highest preference among most of the people. As for the reasons for their choices, it is categorized into eight major reasons, shown in fig. 6 (remake). Every participant is allowed to have three maximum votes. The good environment provided in

Starbucks is the major reason why people like to go there, which has 41 votes. Good services provided by the baristas and the well-known brand of Starbucks are the second and third reasons why people choose it, which have 33 and 32 votes respectively. With the survey results shown here, one of the reasons in my hypothesis is wrong because the top three reasons do not include the good qualities of drinks that make people want to consume there, but due to the well-known brand itself.



Fig. 5: Numbers of preference for the chain coffee shop of my respondents

Fig. 6: Numbers of votes for the reasons of their choice of the coffee shop



For my last part, the familiarity with the activities holds in Starbucks (see fig. 7). Among the 69 respondents who preferred going to Starbucks, only 9% know all the activities held in Starbucks; whereas, most of them only know about the buy one get one free activity. There are even 7% who do not know any activities at all. Therefore, I am going to talk about this situation in my suggestion part.

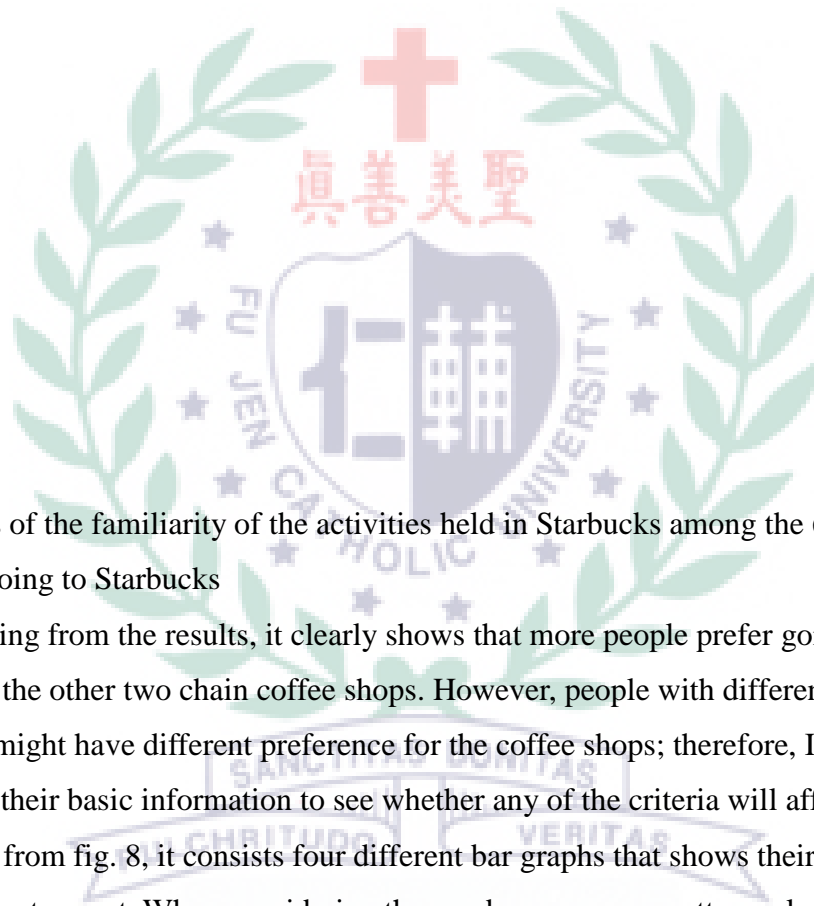


Fig. 7: Numbers of the familiarity of the activities held in Starbucks among the 69 respondents who preferred going to Starbucks

After reading from the results, it clearly shows that more people prefer going to Starbucks, comparing with the other two chain coffee shops. However, people with different age, career, or monthly salary might have different preference for the coffee shops; therefore, I compare their preference with their basic information to see whether any of the criteria will affect their choice.

As shown from fig. 8, it consists four different bar graphs that shows their preference by looking at different aspect. When considering the gender group, no matter males or females, their highest preference is Starbucks, which is 57% for males and 74% for females. As for the age groups, no matter what age they are, the highest preference is also Starbucks, which is 80% for age between 15 years old to 20 years old, 76% for 20 to 30 years old, 50% for 30 to 40 years old, and 58% for age above 40 years old. The aspect of the career has no exception too. It does not matter whether they are students or they are at work, the highest preference is Starbucks, which is 76% for students and 62% for people who are at work. As for the last criteria, monthly salary, people in different groups of monthly earning all choose Starbucks as their highest preference as

well, which is 70% for salary of NT\$0 to NT\$10000, 75% for NT\$10000 to NT\$20000, 88% for NT\$20000 to NT\$30000, and 61% for above NT\$30000.

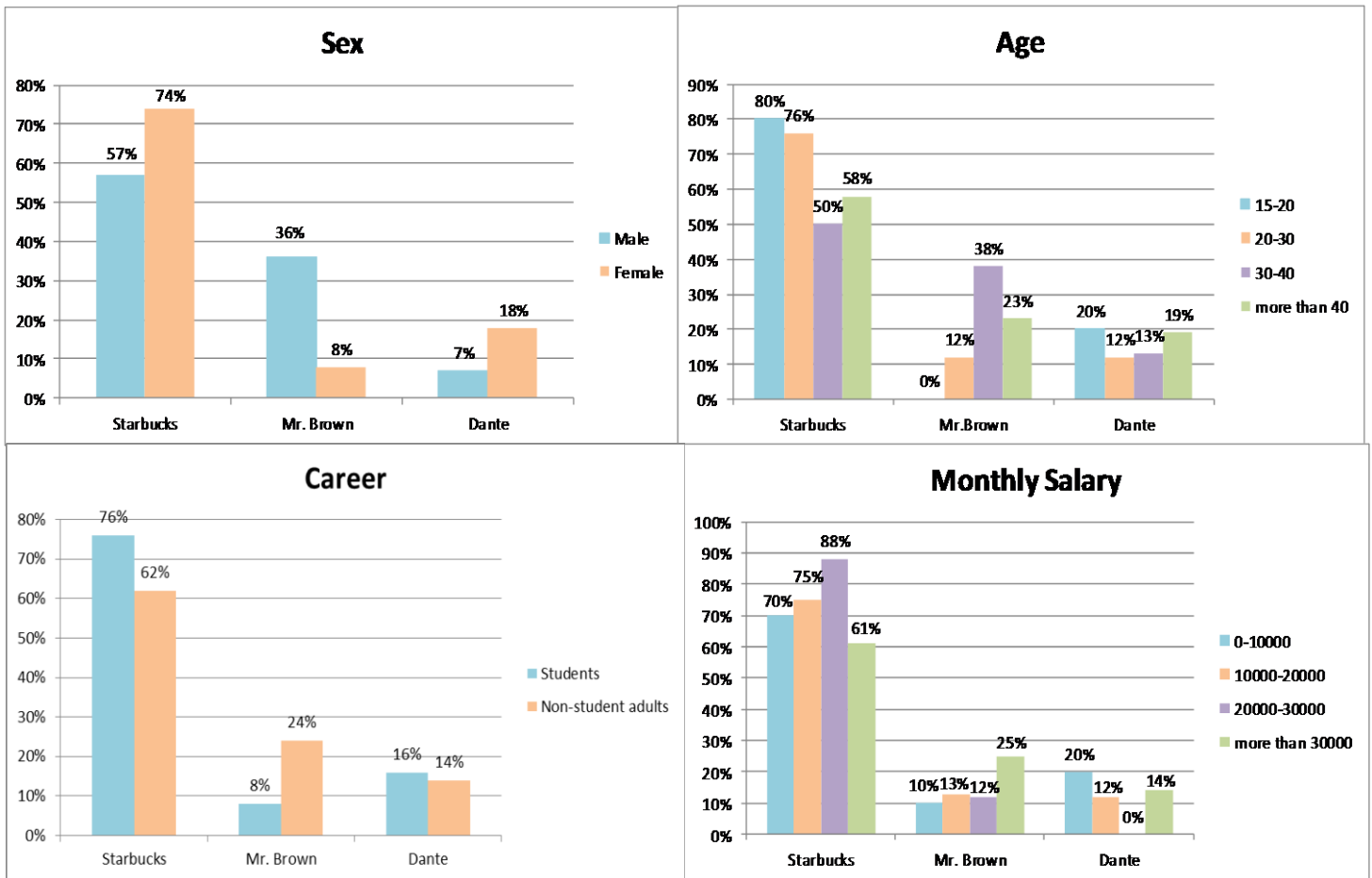


Fig. 8: Preference for the chain coffee shop by looking at different aspects

After analyzing the results from four different aspects, Starbucks always remains the highest preference, regardless of gender, age, career, and the monthly salary. Starbucks is not only the most preferable chain coffee shop, but also shows a huge difference of the percentage with the second highest as shown in Figure 5, with 69 people choose Starbucks to go to; for the second coffee shop- Mr. Brown, it drops to only 16 people and Dante has only 15 people. Thus, there must be some dominant reasons for this outcome.

From the results shown in Figure 5, the top three reasons why people prefer going to Starbucks are because of the good environment, good services, and Starbucks being the well-known brand. For the first two reasons, they are proved in my literature review. Starbucks is always famous for its comfortable environment and warm services provided by the baristas in

any stores around the world. However, picking Starbucks to go to because it is a well-known brand is the reason that is specially found in this research paper.

According to the research papers I have shared previously, four of them have stated one of the reasons why Starbucks is able to become so successful is because of the good environment. In the survey results, many of the respondents have mentioned that Starbucks is a very clean environment and the ambiance there is also relaxing which make people want to stay longer. Many participants also like the music played there, saying that it makes people to have a delighted mood. One of the respondents, a female college student, has said that not only the environment of guest seating places in Starbucks is always neat and clean, but also the toilet. Whenever she walks in the toilet, the floor is never wet and there is also no bad smell. In addition to this, the sofa provided in the store is very comfortable; it allows her to seat there for a really long time doing her assignments. On the contrary, they have also commented on Mr. Brown and Dante's environment. Most of them said that they do not feel comfortable sitting in the environment since it is more crowded, noisier, and dirtier comparing to Starbucks. Another female college student respondent has said that whenever she looks at the recycle area, it is always dirty. The waiter or waitress barely wipe it so she does not feel comfortable being inside.

The second common reason is the good services provided by the Partners, which was also mentioned in two of the research papers I have mentioned earlier. It is also one of the major reasons why Starbucks can be so successful. Many of my respondents have mentioned that whenever they walk into Starbucks, partners always wear big smiles on their faces and greet them friendly. Most of them also appreciate their customization since they provide a lot of choices for customers. Writing words or drawing on the paper cups also touches the customer's heart since they often give customers different types of encouragement. One of my female respondents has said that there are all kinds of customization to satisfy different customers' needs. It is already nice of them to ask the names of the customers, there are also different types of milk like whole milk, low-fat milk, non-fat milk, and soybean milk for them to choose from. She finds it very sweet. Adversely, most of them think that the workers in Mr. Brown and Dante do not have a good serving attitude because they not only seldom greet customers, they often treat them coldly. Another female respondent has shared an experience, "I used to go to one of Dante's store in Taipei Main Station, the attitude of the workers was not good, it gave me a feeling of he did not want to serve me at all. Even if the food was nice there, I would not want to go to Dante

again.”

Among the top three reasons, the last one is what specially and surprisingly found in this research and among Taiwanese. People choose Starbucks to go to because it is a well-known brand. At the very beginning, I thought that the third reason would be the good qualities of the drinks since many papers have put emphasis on the high-quality of their drinks. Nevertheless, the results of the survey show that brand is more important than the quality itself. It indirectly shows that Taiwanese put more emphasis on the fame, popularity, and reputation. According to Allan Su, she says that many Taiwanese people believe that foreign brands are often superior to the local ones; therefore, western culture vanity is one of the major key factors in determining the consumer decisions and preferences in drink consumption. As a proverb goes in Taiwan, “the moon in foreign countries are rounder(外國的月亮比較圓),” which means that Taiwanese people admire western cultures greatly. Whenever a famous brand enters Taiwan’s market, it will soon become the possession for Taiwanese people to show off their status, wealth, and to prove that they are fashion enough (Yeh). Therefore, probably buying drinks from Starbucks is able to satisfy one’s vanity. Since the prices of Starbucks’ products are quite expensive, not everyone is able to afford it all the time and drinking coffee from Starbucks has also become a symbol of fashion that was established years ago because Starbucks was the first western chain coffee shop that entered Taiwan’s market and the brand-new coffee culture was also brought in by Starbucks. Therefore, the people who are able to drink or eat their products can be used to prove one’s identity, which means, carrying a Starbucks cup can be seen as a status symbol. Another reason for this vanity is because Asians like to judge somebody by appearances (Lee). In Lee’s article, it says that one’s outfit and consumption can directly influence how others think about you. It not only affects your own image, it also affects your business corporation, the relationship with others, as well as the things that surround you. Thus, if you wear luxury brand clothing, drive luxury brand cars, live in luxury apartments, and eat or drink in luxury restaurants or coffee shops, people will admire and respect you, regarding you as a higher-level class figure. To sum up, admiring brands that come from western countries and judging people through their appearances are the two main reasons to cause this vanity among Taiwanese since it is already culturally rooted.

In conclusion, through this research paper, it is proved by the results carried out by 100 respondents that Starbucks has the highest preference among the three chain coffee shops-

Starbucks, Mr. Brown, and Dante. The top three reasons are because of the comfortable environment, good services, and well-known brand. Good environment and good services are always the characteristics of every Starbucks' stores worldwide. These two factors are commonly known to the two of major reasons why Starbucks is able to become such a successful chain. However, the reason for going to Starbucks due to its high reputation is what this research has found out uniquely in Taiwan. The factors cause it to happen are due to the western culture vanity and the judgments simply made through the appearance. Taiwanese people often have a special love towards the brands that come from western countries and belief of showing a higher standard identity. In order to be respected by others, they need brands to build up their confidence, as well as their social status.

Since this western culture vanity is culturally rooted in the society already; therefore, it is hard to change this phenomenon. However, even if Taiwanese people have this value for a long time already, it does not mean that the local chain coffee shops are not likely to be the highest preference in the future. First of all, since they know that Starbucks is famous for its comfortable environment and good services. Local chains can start from these two directions, such as changing their interior decorating into a more special one or training their employees to serve customers better. They can also start from what Starbucks is not famous for, for example, people seldom go to Starbucks due to the sufficient facilities or sufficient sales promotion. Therefore, if they try to provide better and sufficient facilities and hold many various sales promotion, they are likely to attract more customers. With more useful and good facilities and different kinds of sales promotion along with comfortable environment and good services, they might have a chance to become the highest preference chain coffee shop in Taiwan.

As for Starbucks, facing other coffee shops that keep pushing out the old and bringing the new with cheaper prices, it still feels a little pressure. Thus, in order to continually become the leading enterprise under the chain coffee shop industries in Taiwan, comfortable environment and good services should always be maintained. The quality of drinks should also remain the same standard, although this reason only comes as the fourth one why people go to Starbucks, it is still important. Furthermore, according to Figure 7, even if Starbucks has the highest preference, most of the people who prefer going there barely know about the various activities held, besides the buy one get one free. Thus, Starbucks can be more engaged in promoting different sales promotion to attract even more customers to come to consume.



1. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is a study of customers' consumption choices and behaviors from a social and cultural view. It explores how change symbolic meanings encodes in brands, retail settings, or material goods to show their own social status and lifestyle goals.

2. Corporate culture refers to the shared values, attitudes, and beliefs among members of a specific organization. It is "rooted in an organization's goals, strategies, structure, and approaches to labor, customers, investors, and the greater community. As such, it is an essential component in any business's ultimate success or failure" ("Corporate").



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