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DECODING THE 'STARBUCKS' FRENZY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY WITH CAFÉ COFFEE DAY

KHUSHBOO GUPTA
ASST. PROFESSOR
SHAHEED BHAGAT SINGH (EVENING) COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI
NEW DELHI

ABSTRACT

Following paper reflects on growth trajectories of two major café chains, Starbucks and Café Coffee Day in India, with a focus on how Starbucks is localizing in India. Starbucks, an international brand based in US, recently entered the Indian market, whereas Café Coffee Day has been operating since 1996. While Starbucks' success is unmatched globally (especially in the US), Café Coffee Day's success in India is unmatched till date. What are the factors that help the companies survive and grow in India and click with the customers, are analyzed here, along with their comparison.


KEYWORDS

coffee chain, coffee industry, customer relationship, social responsibility.

JEL CLASSIFICATION

M00, M3

INTRODUCTION

 Starbucks was established in 1971 with a single store in Seattle. In around 45 years, it has grown exponentially with more than 21000 outlets in more than 50 countries. The products offered include coffee, tea, merchandise, fresh food and related consumer products (Starbucks company profile). The company entered the Indian markets in October 2012 through a joint venture, with Tata Global Beverages, called Tata Starbucks Limited, and opened stores under the brand name "Starbucks- A Tata alliance". The hype around the brand in India started even before the opening of the first store. And the company has been able to maintain that interest of the customers in the brand.

On the other hand, Café Coffee Day (CCD) opened its first outlet in 1996 in Bangalore. CCD is a part of Coffee Day Global Limited, which is India's largest coffee conglomerate. The company has expanded to even foreign locations of Vienna, Austria and Czech Republic. In India, it operates through various formats of outlets (like restaurants and grab and go) and has over 2000 outlets across various cities. Subsequently, it has become the "largest organized retail café chain in the country". The company can be credited for starting the coffee culture in the country with the help of 'cafes', erstwhile an unexplored phenomenon (Café Coffee Day).

STARBUCKS' OPERATIONS IN INDIA

To cater to the needs of the majorly-tea-drinking nation, Starbucks had to localize. This started with the penning of the deal itself. To maintain the highest quality standards, the company owns and manages the coffee roasting facilities itself across the globe, however, in India, as the company partnered with Tata Global Beverages, it agreed to using Tata coffee's roasting facility for this market. They believed that the quality standards here match theirs. This was the beginning of the many changes that the company made especially for the Indian market. Coffee drinking, worldwide, is mainly based on 'grab and go' phenomenon, wherein people get the coffee on their way. However, here in India, coffee is sold through sit in bars where customers spend hours. Young Indians find it convenient and refreshing to hang out at the coffee bars especially with their friends. A good number of young people along with the rising income levels of the middle class have paved the way for expansion of the coffee industry. Lured by such huge potential, many international players Lavazza Spa, Gloria Jean's and Costa coffee had already entered the Indian market. Starbucks is also trying to make its mark in this market.

Starbucks' focus everywhere has been on creating a 'third place' for its customers, after their home and office. In this bid, the company tries to maintain a cozy ambience of its outlets. The baristas (called as partners by the company) are trained to personalize the service they provide and hence to enhance the 'complete experience' of the customers. The stores provide free wifi facility. The customers are called by their first names to "create conversations". Every customer is provided with customized coffee suiting their tastes and coffee seminars are held to improve the awareness about coffee. In short every effort is put in to create a relationship with every customer so as to provide them with a very comfortable environment. The company has gone a step ahead in India, in this respect. It has focused greatly on the ambience of the stores here and many of them can be even considered their best in comparison to stores in other countries (Bailay, 2014). The stores have been 'Indianized' with the use of solid Indian teak tables, hand carved wooden screens, ropework designs and vintage trunks. In fact the menu has also been altered to suit the tastes of the local customers. The items vary from store to store also, depending on their locations. The coffee options are the same as anywhere else in the world along with the quality of coffee (though sourcing is localized); however, more variants to beverages are added like those of teas. At the same time, the company maintains its pricing strategy of 'premium pricing' and does not change it to suit the requirements of the majority (Mitra, 2014). So, while the rivals in the industry might be working hard to get the larger share of the market, Starbucks' focus is to establish itself as a premium coffee brand, with high focus on quality. In this bid, the company has been investing a lot in the country. On an average one store of the company is opened every two weeks in India and every store is making revenues three times higher than the competitors in the region (Vijayaraghavan, 2015). The company has been able to achieve this recognition among the Indians despite the fact that the products of the company are very less advertised. The products speak for themselves. The customers are so loyal that they spread the word. However, the company does use the social media to maintain the relationship with the customers.

Another distinguishing factor about Starbucks, that makes it all the more talked about, is social responsibility that the company understands very well. It is committed to bring a change in the communities around the world. In India, the company has joined hands with Tata, in their initiative for providing special education and rehabilitation facilities, through a school named "Swastha". To help improve the lives of tea growing communities, the company has been associated with another project named CHAI (Community, Health and Advancement Initiative). This initiative helps people with employment by teaching them the required skills and even helps them to get access to basic amenities like water and sanitation. Wherever the company sets up business, it inspires the employees as well as the customers to engage with the communities and support them. Another thing that Starbucks is known for, is ethical sourcing of coffee and fair trade practices. Not only the company has developed the ethical sourcing guidelines to be followed by every store, it actively supports the farmers by investing in their communities. The company cultivates diversity within the organization to help every person grow. Starbucks has also taken multiple steps to preserve the environment. Some of the initiatives in this area are: making green stores and using energy efficient designs and technology, continually improving the ways of working so as to minimize the use of water and making environment friendly cups. The company also runs a business ethics and compliance programme that provides ethics training and creates awareness to ensure that their 'partners' take the ethical decisions in every situation (Being a responsible company).

CAFÉ COFFEE DAY'S OPERATIONS IN INDIA

CCD is the company credited for starting the coffee culture in the country. It has been practically the only coffee bar available in various parts of the country. This gives it the first mover advantage. The young, college going people have learnt the 'going out for coffee' concept from CCD only. Its affordable prices makes it even more attractive for youth. This gives the brand a special recognition and equity in the minds of the customer. No other competitor has been able to enjoy such brand image. As already noted, CCD is a part of Coffee Day Global Ltd. This conglomerate is indulged in producing, processing as well as selling coffee domestically and abroad. This gives CCD an advantage as it is able to control all its operations. This bean-to-cup strategy of CCD helps it run its operations much more efficiently than any other coffee chain. CCD uses mainly four different formats to serve its customers. There are more than 1500 CCD regular outlets. Then there is 'The Lounge', targeting more affluent and mature customers, which addresses meal needs as well. There are around 50 such outlets in the country. 'The Square' cafes serve single origin coffees in 5 outlets. There are more than 687 'EXPRESS Outlets' serving people on the go, in their fast paced lives. They are available in shopping malls, railway stations, airports, parks, etc. Through these different formats, the company charges differential prices to cater to a larger audience (Café Coffee Day).

As per the company website, they have established an education trust for empowering and educating the youth in the country. Also they have been UTZ certified, which is a certification for growing coffee responsibly (Café Coffee Day). As part of growing coffee responsibly, the following are some of the practices: sourcing coffee from sustainably managed coffee estates, converting the outer layer of coffee cherries into manure, setting of effluent treatment plant, rainwater harvesting, energy conservation and sustainable agriculture practices. The company also employs differently abled people, whom they call 'silent brew masters'. However the CSR activities of Café Coffee Day aren't much talked about (Vijayara, 2010).

COMPARISON

Starbucks and Café Coffee Day are both big names in the industry. Though the timeline for both the companies differ, Starbucks being a recent entrant in the Indian market, yet both have a firm foothold in the industry. Both have loyal customer base. Whereas Starbucks' image is that of a premium brand catering to mainly high class customers, Café Coffee Day is seen as a more pocket friendly brand, which young college goers can afford. Though, all around the world, Starbucks' target customers are business class and high income group people; however, in India, the company targeted not just the business class but also the young people, who are actually the force behind the whole coffee culture in the country. With this view, the company's pricing strategy in India is different from anywhere else in the world. Prices are set here competitively keeping in mind the industry standards. Nonetheless, prices of the products are still higher as compared to Café Coffee Day (see Appendix, table 1 and 2). In fact, Café Coffee Day's The Lounge format, charges premium prices, but even those prices are lesser than those of Starbucks (see Appendix, table 1 and 3). So, even though Starbucks have kept the prices low in Indian market as compared to other markets, yet, those prices are still higher than Café Coffee Day's. Thus, Starbucks' strategy in India can be identified as not directly competing with CCD but instead the company identified a scope in premium segment and targeted that segment. Further, Café Coffee Day follows differential pricing through its different formats, which is not the case with Starbucks.

Ambience wise, Starbucks scores way above CCD. The efforts put in by Starbucks to create an attractive décor and to maintain a customer friendly environment have already been illustrated. In comparison to Starbucks, CCD has not focused that much on the ambience to keep the costs low.

Starbucks believe in word of mouth promotion. There is hardly any visible promotion done by the company, except maintaining a relationship with the customers through social media. And the loyal customers spread the word about the company and its high quality coffee. On the other hand, CCD does and extensive promotion of its products. One can find newspaper as well as television advertisements with tempting photos of the food items calling out to people. Also, CCD often provides great offers to the customers for discounts as part of its promotion strategy. As of now, here in India, such offers from Starbucks are unheard of.

In terms of socially responsible activities, both the company run many programs and initiatives for both the society as well as the environment. However, the difference is that

Starbucks has been able to capitalize on its initiatives, whereas Café Coffee Day has not. Corporate social responsibility has been proved to be beneficial for the companies. On the one hand, Starbucks very well publicize its activities, CCD has not been very vocal about them.

CONCLUSION

Starbucks is definitely a brand to reckon with. Its 'premium' status makes it all the more intriguing. How it is able to survive in the Indian market famous for low disposable incomes and highly price sensitive customers, makes it a very good case study for businesses. Also, such level of commitment towards the society is unheard of, especially in the industry where Starbucks operates. Café Coffee Day also runs various programs for the benefit of the society and the environment. However, its initiatives are not very well put out for the investors and customers to know. Even though such practices impact customers positively, they are not at all publicized.

While CCD has the first mover advantage, Starbucks, with its global brand image, can easily become a benchmark for other players in the industry, for the whole experience that it provides to its customers. A coffee shop could be much more than just a coffee shop, is taught by Starbucks only. It will be interesting to find out whether the companies will be able to continue with their growth level and maintain their charm in the years to come. Also interesting will be to find out the market share of the two companies in the wake of indirect competition that each gives the other.

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APPENDIX

Prices of both companies are taken at a common location, so as to avoid locational bias in prices.

To facilitate comparison of prices, some common items in the following different menus are highlighted using same colours.

TABLE 1: PRICES AT STARBUCKS

	Solo	Doppio
Espresso	100	110
Espresso Macchiato	100	110
Espresso con Panna	100	110

	Short	Tall	Grande	Venti
Caffe Americano	110	130	150	170
Cappuccino	125	145	165	185
Caffe Latte	125	145	165	185
Vanilla Latte	160	180	200	220
Hazelnut Latte	160	180	200	220
Caramel Macchiato	140	160	180	200
Caffe Mocha	145	165	185	205
White chocolate mocha	150	170	190	210
Frappuccino (Coffee)		145	165	185
Frappuccino (caramel)		185	205	225
Frappuccino (espresso)		185	205	225
Frappuccino (mocha)		165	185	205
Frappuccino (white chocolate mocha)		170	190	210
Frappuccino (java chip)		170	190	210
Signature hot chocolate	115	135	155	180
Kids' hot chocolate	115			
Brewed coffee	105	115	125	135
Pour over cone brewed coffee	105	115	125	135
Cold coffee			185	
Vanilla cream		170	190	210
Green tea cream		170	190	210
Double chocolate chip Frappuccino		190	210	230
Full leaf brewed tea	105	125	145	165
Green tea latte	110	130	150	170
Chai tea latte	110	130	150	170
Iced shaken tea		130	150	170

Source: <https://www.zomato.com/ncr/starbucks-1-connaught-place-new-delhi/menu#tabtop>

TABLE 2: PRICES AT CAFÉ COFFEE DAY

	Regular	King
Espresso	69	
cappuccino	79	93
Hazelnut cappuccino	99	113
Vanilla cappuccino	99	113
Café latte	84	98
Hazelnut latte	104	118
Vanilla latte	104	118
macchiato	85	
Café americano	85	
Café mocha	99	
Café frappe	105	
Choco frappe	142	
Crunchy frappe	105	
Crunchy vanilla frappe	105	
Gourmet hot chocolate	101	
Cold choco latte	105	
Green tea	83	
Darjeeling tea	83	
Assam tea	79	
Masala chai	79	
Mango shake	121	
Green apple soda	99	
Cool blue	99	

Source: <https://www.zomato.com/ncr/cafe-coffee-day-1-connaught-place-new-delhi/menu#tabtop>

TABLE 3: PRICES AT 'THE LOUNGE' (CCD)

Pour over (brew)	89
French press (brew)	119
espresso	60
Double chocolate mocha	125
Lounge cappuccino	98
Lounge latte	92/102(larger size)
Lounge frappe	119
Assam tease	84
Darjeeling spell	86
Green tea	86
Hot choco latte	94
Cold choco latte	114
Nutty choco latte	125

Source: <https://www.zomato.com/ncr/cafe-coffee-day-the-lounge-connaught-place-new-delhi/menu#tabtop>

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