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Coffee Consumption Behaviour in Economic Downturns

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Abstract:

The aim of the research was to identify the possible changes that might occurred on consumers' behaviour during the recent economic recession, towards buying coffee from Starbucks and providing solutions for the improvement. Questionnaire method was chosen and 100 questionnaires were distributed. From the survey, it was identified that, consumers generally consume coffee at least once a day. The most significant groups of responses for frequency of coffee consumption represent the groups who consumer coffee once a day or twice a day. The participants are also shown to be especially sensitive to the taste of coffee in terms of factors that influence purchasing behaviour in general and in Starbucks. This suggests that the participants in the survey are satisfied with the taste of Starbucks due to the relatively equal responses towards preferring taste as a general factor for coffee consumption and for consumption of coffee at Starbucks. With regards to the effects of the economic crisis on the behaviours of the participants of the survey towards spending for food and drink, it can be seen that half of the respondents indicated that the economic crisis had an effect on their spending habits. However, in terms of the effects of the crisis on spending at Starbucks, half of the population indicated that their spending had not changed due to the attractive environment that Starbucks provides for studying and relaxing. This indicates that the consumers of Starbucks are affected by more than the coffee and view the environment as an additional service that creates value for them. This is not reflected in the response to the factors that influence coffee purchase. However, this may imply that the participants choose Starbucks due to the environment, which ultimately leads to purchasing.

Keywords: Economic recession, beverage consumption, coffee marketing

1. Introduction

Similar to every other crisis, financial crisis is also encompasses uncertainty and instability in markets. A financial crisis which has an impact on the entire system arises due to global issues which are basic elements of the business administration and schemes of such markets. Such issues are previously present in the system; though they must be fuelled by exterior factors such as economic recession, a financial crisis which influences many nations or the entire world, the bankruptcy of an important corporation within the system or the financial strains of such corporations in the system. The impact of economic recessions is significantly harmful to organisational implementations. Such occurrences within the system generate problems for the financial system as a whole and also disrupt the unproblematic functions of organisations along with the business endeavours in any sector. Thus, because of the materialisation of such crisis, the capability of actors in the market of borrowing and lending are harmfully impacted, resulting in the breakdown of the economy depending on the vastness of the crisis. Knight (1921) maintains that uncertainty in the economic market is essential for economic behaviour rather than the threats. Uncertainty, in reality, depicts the changing nature of business and does not signify the casual elements which steadily distribute the probability. Therefore, accurate impending predictions and forecasts are not likely determined by existing historical information. Uncertainty is associated with approaching occurrences, which probably will not be reduced to neutral prospects. Furthermore, it supplies opportunities for organisations to produce profits in significantly competitive markets. Due to recent occurrences within the international economic markets organisation and scholars must identify new strategic designs for lasting survival in recent circumstances.

The recent organisational atmosphere has indeed produced significant uncertainty for organisations to handle (Allen, 2009). For this reason, organisations must make difficult choices quickly so as to adjust to varying situations.

Regarding the present circumstances of business environment, it can be seen that the problems within the environment will probably increase, forming the need for organisations to decide upon things more quickly. Thus, organisations must adapt to novel pressures and situations within the market swiftly so as to manage unexpected changes and reduce strains that can occur amongst concerned individuals which contains the workforce to improve accomplishments on the whole (Allen, 2009).

Taking aforementioned descriptions into consideration, it may be maintained that organisations are obliged to be more adaptable and forceful than they have previously been so as to endure and contend within such circumstances (Allen, 2009).

Based on these, the aim of the research is to identify the possible changes that might occurred on consumers' behaviour during the recent economic recession, towards buying coffee from Starbucks and providing solutions for the improvement.

2. Strategy and Corporate Strategy

The word strategy is based on previous Athenian thinking of strategies, related to the amalgamation of terms "army" and "to lead" (De Wit and Meyer, 2004). In a different manner, it is portrayed by contemporary organisations as being correlated to strategic exploits and making of decisions (Mintzberg, 1987). Ghemawat (2008) defines strategy as a plan or scheme of an organisation regarding its primary objectives, procedures and action directives within a complete whole.

Due to aforementioned descriptions, corporate strategy is defined as the model of decisions within a company, which recognise and reveal the objectives, aims and goals of it and also produce prime plans and schemes so as to attain such objectives (Srinivasan, 2009). When there is a recession, there is a deterioration of available resources to companies which also results in considerable decrease of customer spending, consumers spend less capital lent by establishments enhancing the degree of market competition. The initial changes within the economy take place in the customers' outlook. As they have less disposable earnings, they have a tendency to lessen their spending in association with the global fall in the economy. They are more prone to be aware of purchases and be more price-conscious (Piercy, Cravens and Lane, 2010). Furthermore, as they are apprehensive in regard to their individual money and savings, they may delay planned purchases. Similarly, corporations also lessen their spending, particularly those for novel investments, which may be put off to a later date, so as to conserve liquid property. In addition, during a recession, corporate consumers can be unpredictable and they may vary their behaviour of purchasing dependent on circumstanced of business (Pearce and Michael, 2006). Thus, due to the aforementioned economic changes, profit margins also decline. The efficiency of cost in manufacturing decreases (Perry et al., 1993). When considering the levels of prices, as rivals are more probable to supply better terms for consumers so as to boost their inflows of cash, the other organisations must endure by cutting prices.

Such factors of extra competitiveness decrease in prices, and the decline of the cost of efficiency for manufacturing result in profit margins to decline at times of recession (Domowitz et al., 1987). These elements are additionally roused by global organisations at times of recession (Pearce and Michael, 2006). Subsequently, troubled customers also result in troubles for the banks. Banks cautiously operate loans at times of recession so as to increase the value of their loan portfolios, resulting is less lending. Under such situation, organisations which do have a strong fiscal make-up are not able to borrow loans when they need it most, resulting in more corporate destruction and bankruptcy. Thus, it is seen that a times of recession that sales decrease, the margin of profits is thinner and the available loans are reduced which can lead to the major fall of resources that the organisation can utilise, which can be dangerous for its survival (Pearce and Michael, 2006).

Nonetheless, the impact of the recession is not similar in every sector. For example, the endeavours of a recurring industry than supplies enduring products such as expensive metals and jewellery, hotels, automotive, airlines, electronic etc. have a tendency to conclude similarly in recessions. At times of recession, prices maintain or decrease, organisational spending lessen, real returns decline, production drops under capacity and levels of employment drop in such industries (Pearce and Robinson, 2002). On the other hand, the counter-cyclical sectors endure duration of increased sales during recessions. Industries of this kind encompass sectors such as insurance, food, alcoholic beverages, and home sustainment; the accomplishments of such industries are not correlated to the collective environment of the economy as even during a recession, the public must consume vital products and services such as medical requirements and food (Schraeder and Hoover, 2010).

Medical products have a tendency to be less impacted by the deteriorating condition of the economy as the consumers are fairly less sensitive to medical prices because of their enhanced awareness of their well-being. Besides food and health care, other non-cyclical sectors that are not as impacted by the downturn include auditing, accounting, and secretarial services along with lathers, toiletries and disinfectants.

Also it is observed that customers are more predisposed to spend on donating to services whereas they lessen their expenditures on purchases (Pearce and Michael, 2006). As the economic downturns have different effects to different sectors, strategic responses are also varies among the organisations.

3. Strategic Response to Economic Downturns

Significant challenges have been faced in the international economy for the past few years in light of the challenges presented by the financial crisis for the organizations. It is seen from recent events that many organizations are downsizing, liquidating or becoming involved in various strategic activities in order to survive in the market (Schraeder and Hoover, 2010). To Bigelow and Chan (1992), strategic responses to economies in recession are obscured because of the ordinary elements of a recession. As swift changes take place in the environmental benevolence, the executive decisions of an organisation are more difficult and multifaceted. In accordance with this, managers must assess the economic risks of business enterprises versus the threats of not investing in an aggressive environment (Gurkov, 2010). Available literature proposes that

this is basic fear for organisations as it possesses enduring impacts in the levels of competition and viability (Ghemawat 1993). Thus, it is claimed that it must take on strategies of turnaround in response to the economic recession; this is due to the fact that adaptability is vital under these economic circumstances (Latham, 2009).

Demos and his colleagues (2001) propose that companies must regard the subsequent issues so as to deal with the shifting economic atmosphere; firstly because of the quick technological transmissions and communication, companies must advance from one strategic approach to another so as to obtain value from the organisation's present situation (handling a momentary advantage). Secondly, because of potential prospects, dangers can come about more frequently than before in this rapidly evolving economic atmosphere, companies must locate a means of value constellations through the aid of vertical integrations (navigating the value constellations). Thirdly, as the strategies should be more forceful than previous, companies must in the method of modifying itself to always absorb a novel strategic stance (strategy and change). Lastly, as change necessitates the navigation of new areas, strategic learning is vital (strategic learning). Thus, it may be maintained that, under current vague economic circumstances, companies should be able to constantly acclimatise to the quickly evolving situations. Demos and his colleagues (2001) further stated that despite the continuous changes that exist in the business environment of today, companies typically utilize change as a turnaround strategy. In this context, Schendel et al. (1976) claim that two specific categorical groups define these recovery strategies as: efficiency oriented and entrepreneurial oriented. The authors state that if downturns exist because of operations that are inefficient, the organization should incorporate the efficiency oriented strategies which include asset reduction and cost reduction.

Additionally, they state that when the corporate strategy no longer applies, then an organization should implement changes in order to align itself to the new market. In other words, in this situation, the organization should establish entrepreneurial strategies (Schendel et al., 1976). However, Arogyaswamy et al. (1995) state that the turnaround procedure includes two levels. These include the decline stemming and the recovery strategy. The main goal of the decline stemming strategy is to provide stability to the financial position of the organization. Therefore, this strategy includes eliminating inefficiencies, rallying support from stakeholders and providing stability in the decision making process and internal environment.

The success and application of the decline stemming strategy depends greatly on the significance of the state of the organization and the distress imposed upon it as well as the resource slack available. When stability in the organizations financial position has been achieved, a recovery strategy should be implemented. From this, the company must make decisions concerning whether it take a profitability approach, while reducing size or utilize growth oriented strategies such as the entrepreneurial strategies.

Arogyaswamy and Yasai-Ardekani (1997) examined the significance that efficiency improvements, cutbacks and technology investments have on the turnaround process. It was seen that increases in efficiency and cutbacks represented essential components of successful turnarounds because these activities contribute to profitability and improve resource allocation. Additionally, these activities also contribute to gaining support from stakeholders as well as raising capital and resources need for additional strategies. Chowdhury and Lang (1996) propose that successful turnarounds result from efficiency-oriented activities, not entrepreneurial activities. In this context, it was shown that despite the reason for the downturn, retrenchment showed a significant relationship with turnaround performance. Additionally, Robbins and Pearce (1992) stated that it is important for an organization to implement efficiency-oriented recovery strategies to create a successful turnaround, regardless of the reasons for the decline.

In addition, companies may also consider mergers and acquisitions which may bring about joint operations, enhanced technological potentials, the increase in competitive capabilities, the enlargement of geographic markets, the employment of large economies so as to decrease costs and the agreeable organisation of product and services (Weston and Weaver, 2001). However, through the assessment of 4700 corporations by classifying the data into 3 phase: three years before, after and the actual recession years Gulati, Nohria and Wohlgezogen (2010) concluded that four various strategic reactions to economic crisis may be seen throughout the three previous international recessions:

- Prevention-focused companies, which principally take protective action and are more focussed on steering clear of losses and reducing downside threats than their rivals
- Promotion-focused companies, which are more devoted to offensive actions which
- Pragmatic companies, which mix both defensive and offensive action
- Progressive companies, which install the most favourable mixture of defence and offense

Consequently, Gulati, Nohria and Wohlgezogen (2010) observed that progressive organisations come out on top of post-recession eras. The figure below depicts a performance comparison of organisations which followed the aforementioned strategies:

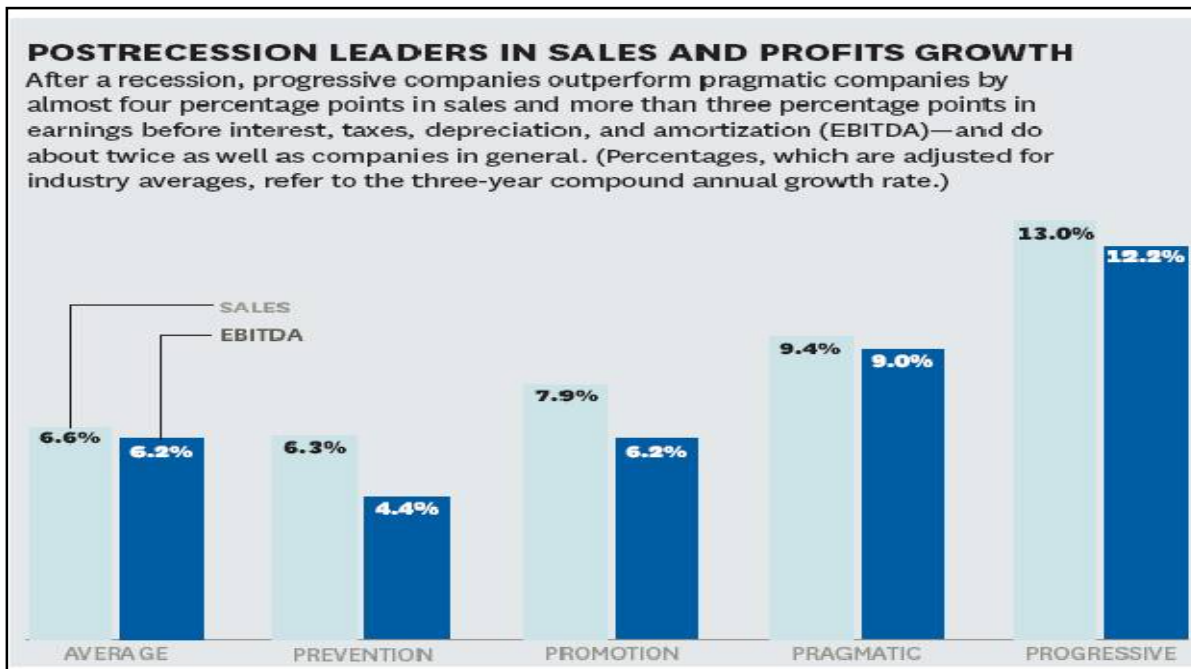


Figure 1

Source: Gulati, Nohria and Wohlgezogen (2010)

4. Methodology

Questionnaire was used for this study. Birn (2002) defines the questionnaire as the question group that is listed properly with the aim of finding out participants’ ideas, responses and behaviours on these questions. In this sense, questionnaire method was used in order to determine the changes in consumers’ spending habits due to the economic slowdown. With the aim of finding out this, questionnaire was developed in semi-structure form.

Population is described as a complete body of people, subjects or items that is used for the purpose of research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). For this study, consumers who live in Turkey constitute the overall population. As it was not possible to collect information from all, sampling method was used. Sampling is described as a subset or subgroup of a given population which is used to represent the entire population (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). For selecting customers the researcher has chosen one particular Starbucks’ outlet, Kadikoy, then questionnaires were distributed randomly. The survey took around two weeks and the questionnaires were self-administered and collected back after the completion by the participants. 100 questionnaires were distributed.

5. Data Analysis

Coffee Drinking Behaviour

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yes	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Coffee Drinking Regularity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid More than Twice a Day	5	5.0	5.0	5.0
Twice a Day	20	20.0	20.0	25.0
Once a Day	20	20.0	20.0	45.0
Once in 2 Days	15	15.0	15.0	60.0
Once in a Week	26	26.0	26.0	86.0
Twice a Week	10	10.0	10.0	96.0
Once a Month	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Factors Influencing Coffee Buying

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Price	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Brand Name	10	10.0	10.0	20.0
	Quality	30	30.0	30.0	50.0
	Taste	50	50.0	50.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Purchasing Coffee from Starbucks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Always	30	30.0	30.0	30.0
	Sometimes	40	40.0	40.0	70.0
	Rarely	20	20.0	20.0	90.0
	Never	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Reason for Preferring Starbucks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Answer	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Brand Name	20	20.0	20.0	30.0
	Quality	30	30.0	30.0	60.0
	Taste	40	40.0	40.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Frequency of Visiting Starbucks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Answer	10	10.0	10.0	10.0
	More than 2 Times a Day	5	5.0	5.0	15.0
	2 Times a Day	10	10.0	10.0	25.0
	Daily	35	35.0	35.0	60.0
	Once in 2 Days	25	25.0	25.0	85.0
	Once in a Week	2	2.0	2.0	87.0
	Twice a Week	10	10.0	10.0	97.0
	Once a Month	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Effect of Economic Crisis on Spending

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
	No	35	35.0	35.0	85.0
	I am not sure	15	15.0	15.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Effect of Economic Crisis on Coffee Purchasing

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	50	50.0	50.0	50.0
	No	40	40.0	40.0	90.0
	I am not sure	10	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

- **The effect of economic recession on money spending habit on food and drink**

For the responses generated by the participants of the survey concerning the question “Has the economic recession affected your money spending habit on food and drink?”, those who indicated that the economic crisis has affected their spending on food and drink explain that the economic crisis has affected all areas of spending and that they attempt to find the best value for their money. Additionally, for the respondents that indicated that the crisis did not affect their spending for food and drink, the participants state that food and drink are necessary products and therefore, people have to purchase them despite economic conditions.

6. Discussion

In the literature it was claimed that when there is a recession, there is a deterioration of available resources to companies which also results in considerable decrease of customer spending, consumers spend less capital lent by establishments enhancing the degree of market competition (Piercy, Cravens and Lane, 2010). The initial changes within the economy take place in the customers’ outlook. As they have less disposable earnings, they have a tendency to lessen their spending in association with the global fall in the economy (Piercy, Cravens and Lane, 2010). They are more prone to be aware of purchases and be more price-conscious (Piercy, Cravens and Lane, 2010). Furthermore, as they are apprehensive in regard to their individual money and savings, they may delay planned purchases (Piercy, Cravens and Lane, 2010). With regards to the effects of the economic crisis on the behaviours of the participants of the survey towards spending for food and drink, it was found that half of the respondents indicate that the economic crisis had an effect on their spending habits. In this context, the respondents explain that the economic crisis has affected all areas of spending, not just the purchasing of food and drink. Additionally, a smaller portion of the respondents indicate that since food and drink is a necessary purchase for living, their spending habits had not changed. Additionally, it is seen from the survey that the participants relatively state the same opinions towards the purchase of coffee, where the majority indicate that their spending behaviours were affected by the crisis. However, in terms of the effects of the crisis on spending at Starbucks, half of the population indicated that their spending had not changed due to the attractive environment that Starbucks provides for studying and relaxing. Overall it can be said that purchasing coffee at Starbucks was less affected by the economic situation when compared to the overall “average” of purchasing food and drink, or coffee in general.

7. Conclusion

From the survey, it was identified that, consumers generally consume coffee at least once a day. The most significant groups of responses for frequency of coffee consumption represent the groups who consumer coffee once a day or twice a day. The participants are also shown to be especially sensitive to the taste of coffee in terms of factors that influence purchasing behaviour in general and in Starbucks. This suggests that the participants in the survey are satisfied with the taste of Starbucks due to the relatively equal responses towards preferring taste as a general factor for coffee consumption and for consumption of coffee at Starbucks.

The results indicate that the largest group of respondents indicate that they frequent Starbucks “sometimes”, from additional responses concerning the frequency, it can be seen that “sometimes” translates as visiting Starbucks at least once a day for the majority of the respondents.

With regards to the effects of the economic crisis on the behaviours of the participants of the survey towards spending for food and drink, it can be seen that half of the respondents indicated that the economic crisis had an effect on their spending habits. In this context, the respondents explain that the economic crisis has affected all areas of spending, not just the purchasing of food and drink. Additionally, a smaller portion of the respondents indicate that since food and drink is a necessary purchase for living, their spending habits had not changed. Additionally, it is seen from the survey that the participants relatively state the same opinions towards the purchase of coffee, where the majority indicate that their spending behaviours were affected by the crisis. However, in terms of the effects of the crisis on spending at Starbucks, half of the population indicated that their spending had not changed due to the attractive environment that Starbucks provides for studying and relaxing. This indicates that the consumers of Starbucks are affected by more than the coffee and view the environment as an additional service that creates value for them. This is not reflected in the response to the factors that influence coffee purchase. However, this may imply that the participants choose Starbucks due to the environment, which ultimately leads to purchasing.

Overall it can be seen that purchasing coffee at Starbucks was less affected by the economic situation when compared to the overall "average" of purchasing food and drink, or coffee in general. Additionally, due to the indication that the taste of the coffee is acceptable to the participants of the survey, it can be assumed that coffee represents only one of the aspects that affect consumption at Starbucks.

According to results it can be said that organisations can get away from the negative effect of the economic crisis by applying progressive strategies. In this sense it can be said that corporations can make alterations in their overall marketing strategies during economic crises. They can adjust the four aspects of their marketing mix, which are product, price, place, and promotion. Indeed, corporations need to vacate from the markets that they are not dominant in order to focus their resources on their core competency areas instead. Moreover, corporations that are negatively influenced by economic downturns should consider diversification as a significant tactical alternative.

It can also be suggested that extracting the weak products from the market should be the most fundamental tactic in relation to product policy for corporations during down economies. Individuals consider product robustness important in recession periods; therefore, corporations should put emphasis on the product attributes like cost-cutting, robustness and functionality when they are creating new products.

Corporations should also consider research and development activities significantly as well in order to back up new offerings. Indeed, corporations that spend comparatively more on research and development activities can achieve better results in recession periods than those which do not. When there is an improvement in the competences of the corporations in terms of product creation and development as well as a cautious management of the research and development spending, a favourable modification in the common equities can also be expected. In this context, it can be suggested that when a corporation targets a sales increase in the long run, they should not decrease their research and development activities during economic downturns.

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