Customer Experience in Coffee Stores in Vietnam: A Multidisciplinary Research

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Introduction or Overview

Nowadays, creating a superior customer experience is one of the main goals of retailers in service industries, such as coffee stores. According to Verhoef et al. (2009), the customer experience is a holistic experience that can be created by elements that the retailer can control (e.g., brand perception, service interface, retail atmosphere, assortment, price), but also by elements that are beyond the retailer's control (e.g., influence of others, purpose of purchase). In addition, coffee consumption by Generation Z in Vietnam is continuously increasing, leading to the opening of new stores by international and local brands competing for a positive customer experience. This study aims to explore and better understand Vietnamese Generation Z's holistic in-shop customer experience and its impact on customer loyalty and brand perception using a multidisciplinary approach.

Research Hypothesis/Objectives

This study hypothesises that store atmosphere, employee attitude, product quality and price, queue, and previous visits as important factors contribute to shaping the holistic customer experience of Vietnamese Generation Z in coffee shops. In addition, this study aims to identify the findings of a neuroscience method for measuring brand perception when applied to the experiences of real customers. In addition, this study investigates the impact of customer experience on brand perception and brand loyalty.

Methodology or Approach

A multidisciplinary approach was taken by combining a short version of the Implicit Association Test - Brand Association Reaction Time (BARTT) and a qualitative report of mystery shopping visits. 200 participants (100 visited Starbucks and 100 visited The Coffee House) took part in the BARTT pretest and posttest, as well as a test purchase questionnaire summarising the experience. BARTT data were examined using a Student t-test to analyse the difference in time between pre- and post-test purchase visits to the assigned shop. Structural equation modelling was applied to the mystery shopping data to confirm the individual factors of Generation Z's holistic customer experience in coffee shops in Vietnam and how the customer experience influences brand loyalty.

Major Outcomes, Results and Conclusion

Results confirm the impact of customer experience on short-term brand perception and customer loyalty. After the mystery shopping visit, Generation Z associates Starbucks more strongly with "friendly," "globalised," and "expensive," while The Coffee House is "welcoming," "clean," and "smells good." Both stores are perceived as "unique" compared to traditional Vietnamese coffee shops. This finding is helpful for shop owners to focus on developing strategies that create memorable experiences that positively influence brand perceptions. In addition, factors such as product quality and price, employee attitude, and overall atmosphere can positively or negatively influence Generation Z's customer experience. Furthermore, the result of this study shows that BARTT can be used as a neuroscientific qualitative method to measure brand perception of retailers in the service industry.