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Master Thesis

Evaluation of Corporate Social Responsibility on Brand Equity

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Declaration

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In Prague on date of submission

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Abstract

The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a critical factor in shaping brand perceptions and customer relationships in today's competitive business landscape. This research investigates the intricate relationship between Starbucks India's CSR activities and its brand equity, employing Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model as a theoretical framework. The study explores how CSR initiatives influence brand awareness, brand associations, customer loyalty, and ultimately, brand equity. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, data was collected from 220 Starbucks customers in India through a comprehensive questionnaire measuring demographic characteristics and five key constructs using a five-point Likert scale. The research methodology employed rigorous statistical analysis to examine the nuanced connections between CSR perceptions and brand-related metrics. The findings reveal a complex interplay between CSR activities and brand equity. Notably, the study discovered that CSR activities have a subtle rather than direct impact on brand awareness, brand associations, and customer loyalty. While statistically significant relationships were observed, the magnitude of influence was modest. Brand awareness showed minimal correlation with CSR perceptions, and brand associations demonstrated only incremental changes in response to CSR initiatives. The research contributes to the existing literature by challenging linear assumptions about CSR's impact on brand equity. It suggests that companies like Starbucks India must adopt a more holistic approach to brand building, integrating CSR as one component of a comprehensive brand engagement strategy. The study recommends future research to explore additional variables and qualitative methodologies to uncover the intangible aspects of CSR's influence on brand perception.

Keywords: *Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Customer Loyalty, Brand Equity, Customer-Based Brand Equity Model*

Hodnocení společenské odpovědnosti firem na hodnotu značky

Abstrakt

Společenská odpovědnost firem (CSR) se stala klíčovým faktorem formování vnímání značky a vztahů se zákazníky v dnešním konkurenčním obchodním prostředí. Tato studie zkoumá složitý vztah mezi CSR aktivitami Starbucks India a její hodnotou značky, přičemž využívá Kellerův model hodnoty značky založený na zákazníkovi jako teoretický rámec. Výzkum se zaměřuje na to, jak CSR iniciativy ovlivňují povědomí o značce, asociace se značkou, loajalitu zákazníků a nakonec hodnotu značky. K získání dat byla použita metodologie průřezového šetření, kdy bylo shromážděno 220 odpovědí od zákazníků Starbucks v Indii pomocí komplexního dotazníku, který měřil demografické charakteristiky a pět klíčových konstrukcí pomocí pětibodové Likertovy škály. Výzkumná metodologie zahrnovala přísnou statistickou analýzu ke zkoumání jemných spojitostí mezi vnímáním CSR a ukazateli souvisejícími se značkou. Výsledky odhalily složitou interakci mezi CSR aktivitami a hodnotou značky. Studie ukázala, že CSR aktivity mají spíše jemný než přímý dopad na povědomí o značce, asociace se značkou a loajalitu zákazníků. I když byly pozorovány statisticky významné vztahy, rozsah vlivu byl skromný. Povědomí o značce vykazovalo minimální korelaci s vnímáním CSR a asociace se značkou ukázaly pouze postupné změny v reakci na CSR iniciativy. Tento výzkum přispívá k současné literatuře tím, že vyvrací lineární předpoklady o dopadu CSR na hodnotu značky. Naznačuje, že společnosti jako Starbucks India by měly přijmout komplexnější přístup k budování značky, který integruje CSR jako jednu složku širší strategie zapojení značky. Studie doporučuje, aby budoucí výzkum prozkoumal další proměnné a kvalitativní metodologie k odhalení nehmotných aspektů vlivu CSR na vnímání značky.

Klíčová slova: Společenská odpovědnost firem, Povědomí o značce, Asociace se značkou, Loajalita zákazníků, Hodnota značky, Model hodnoty značky založený na zákazníkovi

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1. Introduction

In today's hypercompetitive business landscape, companies are increasingly recognizing that their responsibilities extend beyond mere profit generation to encompass broader societal and environmental concerns (Iqbal, 2024). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from being the peripheral activity to becoming the central strategic imperative for organizations worldwide (Mosca & Civera, 2017).

Simultaneously, brand equity has emerged as the crucial determinant of long-term business success, representing the intangible yet invaluable assets that companies build through their market presence and customer relationships (Jeon, 2017). The intersection of these two concepts, CSR and brand equity, presents the fascinating area of study, particularly in emerging markets where both corporate responsibility and brand building are rapidly evolving.

Starbucks, the global coffee giant with over 50 years of history and presence in 84 countries, has consistently positioned itself as the company that prioritizes social responsibility alongside business growth (Haski-Leventhal, 2018). In India, where Starbucks entered through the joint venture with Tata Consumer Products in 2012, the company has actively engaged in various CSR initiatives, from sustainable sourcing practices to community development programs. With over 300 stores across 36 cities in India and an aggressive expansion plan targeting 1,000 stores by 2028 (Tunarosa et al., 2024).

The relationship between CSR and brand equity is mediated through several critical components: brand awareness, brand associations, and customer loyalty. Brand awareness represents the degree to which customers can recognize and recall the brand, while brand associations encompass the various meanings and connections that customers attribute to the brand. Customer loyalty, the third component, reflects the behavioral and attitudinal commitment of customers to repeatedly engage with and support the brand (Dann et al., 2006).

Recent global studies indicate that 78% of consumers are more likely to remember companies that have strong CSR programs, and 73% of millennials are willing to spend more on brands that demonstrate commitment to sustainable practices (Business Wire Report, 2021). In India specifically, more than 70% of consumers consider the company's social and environmental commitments when making purchase decisions (EY Report, 2024).

While extensive research exists on CSR and brand equity independently, there remains the significant gap in understanding their relationship in the context of emerging markets, particularly India's unique socio-cultural environment. Previous studies have primarily focused on developed markets or examined these concepts in isolation. Furthermore, the limited research available on the Indian market has not adequately addressed how different dimensions of CSR activities influence specific components of brand equity, especially in the retail sector.

This study addresses these gaps by examining how customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities influence its brand equity through the mediating roles of brand awareness, brand association, and customer loyalty. The research is particularly timely given India's rapidly growing coffee culture and increasing consumer consciousness about corporate social responsibility. Understanding this relationship is crucial as companies invest significantly in CSR activities while seeking to build strong brand equity in competitive markets.

The findings of this study will contribute to both academic literature and practical business applications. From an academic perspective, it will enhance the theoretical understanding of the CSR-brand equity relationship in emerging markets with the Customer-based Brand Equity Model as the theoretical underpinning, potentially leading to the development of more focused frameworks for analyzing this relationship.

For practitioners, particularly those in the retail food and beverage sector, this research will provide valuable insights into how CSR activities can be strategically aligned with brand-building efforts to maximize their impact on brand equity. The findings will be relevant for international brands operating or planning to operate in India, helping them understand how to effectively leverage CSR initiatives for brand building in the Indian retail market context.

2. Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

The current study will lead to answer the following research question:

How do customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities influence its brand equity through brand awareness, brand association, and customer loyalty?

To attain this main question, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

- 1. How do Starbucks India's CSR activities influence customer brand awareness?*
- 2. What associations do customers develop with Starbucks India due to its CSR activities?*
- 3. How do brand awareness and brand association contribute to customer loyalty for Starbucks India?*
- 4. To what extent do customer loyalty, brand awareness, and brand association shape Starbucks India's overall brand equity?*

The aim of the thesis is to evaluate the perception of customers regarding CSR activities of companies and to identify customer loyalty, brand association, brand awareness, and brand equity regarding the companies undertaking CSR activities.

The primary objective of the study is to evaluate the customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities impact its brand equity. Whereas the secondary objectives can be as follows: (a) to assess the customer perceptions of CSR activities influence brand awareness, (B) to analyze the brand associations customers develop in relation to CSR activities, (C) to examine the role of brand awareness and brand association in developing customer loyalty, and (D) to evaluate the collective influence of customer loyalty on brand equity.

2.2 Methodology

This study employs the quantitative research methodology to examine the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility activities and brand equity of Starbucks India, mediated through brand awareness, brand association, and customer loyalty. The research design follows the positivist paradigm, utilizing systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical techniques, enabling the testing of hypothesized relationships between the constructs.

The study is anchored in Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model, which provides the comprehensive framework for understanding how brand equity is built through customer perceptions and experiences (Keller, 2001). This theoretical foundation is particularly relevant as it emphasizes the hierarchical nature of brand building, from awareness through to loyalty, aligning well with the study's analysis of CSR activities influencing the brand equity.

The cross-sectional survey design has been adopted for this study, allowing for the collection of data at the single point in time to examine the current state of customer perceptions. The target population comprises Starbucks customers in India, and the sampling frame includes customers who have visited Starbucks outlets at least once in the past six months.

Non-probability convenience sampling technique is employed to select 220 respondents, acknowledging the limitations in generalizability while ensuring practical feasibility in data collection. The sample size is determined based on the general rule of thumb suggesting the minimum of 10-15 respondents per variable, considering the study's five main constructs and associated variables (Ibrahim, 2022).

The study uses the structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms to gather demographic information, including age, gender, occupation, income level, and Starbucks visit frequency. The survey will be conducted during November 2024, starting from 10th to ending on 27th of the month, with the Google Forms link distributed through various channels including social media platforms and personal networks as mentioned in the Appendix 1.

Construct measurement includes 25 items measuring five constructs: CSR Activities, Brand Awareness, Brand Association, Customer Loyalty, and Brand Equity. These items are measured using the five-point Likert scale, rated from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The collected data will be analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 software. The analysis will proceed in two main phases:

1. Descriptive Analysis: (*Wang & Wong, 2021*)

Measures of Central Tendency (Mean)

$\mu = \sum X/n$, where μ is the population mean, X is the individual values, and n is the sample size

Measures of Dispersion (Standard Deviation)

$\sigma = \sqrt{(\sum (X - \mu)^2/n)}$, where σ is the standard deviation

Measures of Shape:

Skewness = $\sum (X - \mu)^3 / (n-1)\sigma^3$

Kurtosis = $[\sum (X - \mu)^4 / (n-1)\sigma^4] - 3$

2. Inferential Analysis: (*Trafimow et al., 2021*)

Reliability Statistics:

Formula: $\alpha = (N * \bar{c}) / (\bar{v} + (N - 1) \bar{c})$, where (N) is the number of items, (\bar{c}) is the average inter-item covariance, and (\bar{v}) is the average item variance.

Cronbach's Alpha calculation for internal consistency (acceptable value > 0.7)

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient:

$r = \sum (x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y}) / \sqrt{[\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 \sum (y - \bar{y})^2]}$, where \bar{x} and \bar{y} are the means of variables x and y respectively

Simple Linear Regression:

$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$, where Y is the dependent variable, X is the independent variable, β_0 is the y-intercept, β_1 is the slope, and ε is the error term

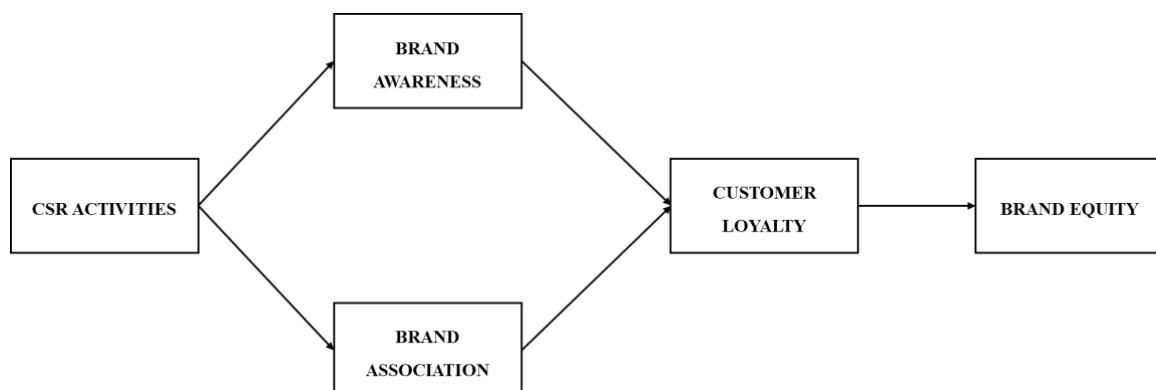
2.3 Conceptual Model

The conceptual model as mentioned in the Figure 1, grounded in the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model, explores how customer perceptions of Starbucks India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities influence its brand equity through the mediating roles of brand awareness, brand association, and customer loyalty.

According to the CBBE framework, brand equity is built hierarchically, beginning with brand awareness, which ensures customers recognize and recall the brand. Awareness is followed by brand association, where customers form emotional and conceptual connections to the brand based on CSR efforts like ethical sourcing and sustainability. These cognitive and emotional responses lay the foundation for customer loyalty, which reflects sustained preference and advocacy, ultimately translating into higher brand equity (Tasci, 2021).

CSR initiatives act as critical signals of the brand's ethical and social commitments, enhancing customer trust and aligning with their values (Moliner et al., 2020). This model demonstrates how Starbucks India's CSR activities not only drive immediate customer perceptions but also strengthen long-term brand equity by fostering meaningful awareness, positive associations, and deep loyalty, consistent with the CBBE model's principles.

Figure 1 - Conceptual Model



Source: Developed by the Author

2.4 Hypothesis

H1: There is no significant impact of customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities on brand awareness.

H2: There is no significant impact of customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities on brand association.

H3: There is no significant impact of brand awareness on customer loyalty towards Starbucks India.

H4: There is no significant impact of brand association on customer loyalty towards Starbucks India.

H5: There is no significant impact of customer loyalty on brand equity towards Starbucks India.

The selected hypotheses aim to evaluate the relationships among customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities, brand awareness, brand association, customer loyalty, and brand equity within the framework of the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model. Specifically, H1 examines whether Starbucks India's CSR initiatives significantly enhance brand awareness, reflecting customers' ability to recognize and recall the brand based on its socially responsible practices. Similarly, H2 tests whether these CSR activities create meaningful brand associations, such as ethical sourcing, environmental consciousness, and social commitment, which add depth and emotional value to the brand's image.

Moving further along the CBBE hierarchy, H3 evaluates the role of brand awareness in driving customer loyalty, determining if familiarity and visibility foster repeat purchases and advocacy. Parallel to this, another H3 investigates the influence of brand associations on customer loyalty, assessing whether emotional and value-based connections with Starbucks India contribute to stronger behavioral commitment. Finally, H5 explores the ultimate impact of customer loyalty on brand equity, measuring how repeat patronage and advocacy, driven by positive perceptions and emotional bonds, reinforce the brand's value in the marketplace.

3. Literature Review

3.1 CSR Activities

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has undergone the remarkable transformation since its inception, evolving from the peripheral business consideration to the central component of corporate strategy and organizational identity. As companies continue to navigate complex global challenges, CSR activities will likely become even more integral to business success and societal well-being (Verk et al., 2021).

The roots of CSR can be traced back to the early 20th century when businesses began recognizing their broader responsibilities beyond profit generation. Initially, CSR manifested primarily through philanthropic activities, with wealthy business owners engaging in charitable giving and community development projects. However, the modern conception of CSR emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, coinciding with growing public awareness of environmental issues and social inequalities (Latapí Agudelo, 2019).

The theoretical foundation of CSR rests on several key perspectives. The stakeholder theory, which gained prominence in the 1980s, argues that businesses must consider the interests of all parties affected by their operations – not just shareholders, but also employees, customers, suppliers, local communities, and the environment. This marked the significant departure from the traditional shareholder-centric view of corporate responsibility (Dmytriiev et al., 2021).

The legitimacy theory provides another crucial theoretical lens, suggesting that businesses operate within the social contract that requires them to align their activities with societal expectations and values. This perspective helps explain why companies increasingly engage in CSR activities as public awareness of social and environmental issues (Olateju et al., 2021).

CSR activities have evolved significantly from simple philanthropic gestures to comprehensive programs integrated into core business strategies. Modern CSR encompasses environmental stewardship, social equity, ethical business practices, and economic sustainability. Companies now implement CSR through various channels, including sustainable supply chain management, renewable energy adoption, community development programs, employee welfare initiatives, and ethical sourcing practices (Singh & Misra, 2022).

Environmental CSR activities have become increasingly sophisticated, moving beyond basic pollution control to encompass circular economy principles, carbon footprint reduction, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable resource management. Companies are investing in renewable energy infrastructure, developing eco-friendly products, and implementing waste reduction programs. These initiatives often yield both environmental benefits and operational cost savings, demonstrating the alignment between profit and purpose (Qin et al., 2019).

Social CSR activities focus on improving community welfare and addressing societal challenges. These include education and skill development programs, healthcare initiatives, poverty alleviation projects, and disaster relief efforts. Companies are also implementing diversity and inclusion programs, fair labor practices, and workplace safety measures as part of their internal CSR commitments (Huda et al., 2018).

Research consistently shows that well-executed CSR activities can positively impact business performance through various mechanisms. Enhanced brand reputation and customer loyalty often result from strong CSR programs, as consumers increasingly favor companies that demonstrate social and environmental responsibility. Employee satisfaction and retention typically improve when companies maintain strong commitments, particularly among younger generations who prioritize working for organizations aligned with values (Islam et al., 2021).

CSR activities also help companies manage risks more effectively by anticipating and addressing potential environmental and social challenges before they escalate into crises. This proactive approach to risk management can protect company value and maintain stakeholder trust during challenging times (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020).

The integration of CSR activities into corporate strategy presents both opportunities and challenges. Successfully embedding CSR into organizational DNA requires clear leadership commitment, effective stakeholder engagement, and alignment between CSR initiatives and business objectives. Companies must navigate the complexity of measuring and reporting CSR impacts, balancing short-term financial pressures with long-term sustainability goals, and maintaining consistency across global operations (Gugenishvili et al., 2023).

Implementation challenges often include resource allocation decisions, organizational resistance to change, and the need to demonstrate tangible returns on CSR investments. Companies must also address the challenge of greenwashing allegations by ensuring their CSR activities deliver genuine impact rather than merely serving public relations purposes (Wickert & De Bakker, 2018).

CSR activities vary significantly across regions and cultures, reflecting different societal expectations, regulatory environments, and development priorities. In developed economies, CSR often focuses on environmental sustainability, ethical business practices, and addressing complex social issues. In emerging markets, CSR frequently emphasizes basic infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment (Jamali & Karam, 2018).

Cultural values and traditions influence how companies approach CSR, with some societies emphasizing collective welfare while others focus more on individual responsibility. These variations necessitate adaptable CSR strategies that respect local contexts while maintaining global standards and principles (Halkos & Skouloudis, 2017).

Digital transformation has revolutionized how companies implement and communicate their CSR activities. Technology enables better measurement and reporting of CSR impacts, facilitates stakeholder engagement through social media and digital platforms, and creates new opportunities for sustainable innovation. Blockchain technology is increasingly used to enhance supply chain transparency and verify ethical sourcing claims, while artificial intelligence helps optimize resource usage and reduce environmental impacts (Lombardi & Secundo, 2021).

While much attention focuses on large corporate CSR initiatives, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play an increasingly important role in advancing sustainable business practices. SMEs often implement CSR activities through informal channels, focusing on local community engagement and environmental improvements within their immediate sphere of influence. Their approach to CSR tends to be more personal and directly connected to local needs, though they may face resource constraints that limit the scale of initiatives (Ortiz-Avram et al., 2018).

3.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness stands as the cornerstone concept in marketing theory and practice, representing the fundamental building block upon which brand relationships are constructed. At its core, brand awareness embodies the ability of consumers to recognize and recall the brand under different conditions, serving as the primary gateway through which all brand communications must pass to achieve their intended effects (Sheninger & Rubin, 2017).

The evolution of brand awareness as the theoretical construct began in the early stages of marketing thought, emerging from the fundamental need to understand how consumers form initial connections with products and services in increasingly crowded marketplaces. The concept has since developed into the multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses various levels of cognitive processing and memory structures, ranging from simple recognition to complex brand recall scenarios (Swaminathan et al., 2020).

At its most basic level, brand awareness represents the strength of the brand's presence in the consumer's mind. This presence manifests in two distinct forms: brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition, often considered the lower threshold of awareness, refers to consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when presented with it as the cue. This form of awareness typically occurs at the point of purchase, where visual and verbal brand elements serve as memory triggers. Brand recall, conversely, represents the more sophisticated level of awareness wherein consumers can retrieve the brand from memory when given only the product category, usage situation, or other contextual cues as prompts (Świtała et al., 2018).

The psychological underpinnings of brand awareness draw heavily from cognitive psychology and memory theory. The human mind processes and stores brand-related information through complex networks of associations, creating mental shortcuts that facilitate decision-making processes. These associative networks form the foundation of brand knowledge structures, with brand awareness serving as the critical first step in building these cognitive frameworks. The strength and quality of these associations directly influence the ease with which consumers can access brand information from memory, ultimately affecting purchase decisions and brand loyalty (Herz & Brunk, 2017).

In the context of consumer behavior, brand awareness plays several crucial roles. Firstly, it serves as the heuristic in decision-making, allowing consumers to simplify their choice processes by relying on familiar brands. This simplification becomes particularly important in low-involvement purchase situations where consumers may not be motivated to engage in extensive information search and evaluation. Secondly, brand awareness contributes to the consideration set formation, as consumers typically only consider brands they are aware of when making purchase decisions. Finally, it acts as an anchor to which other brand associations can be attached, facilitating the development of brand equity (Niittymies, 2020).

The hierarchy of effects model positions brand awareness as the foundational stage in the consumer's journey from brand ignorance to brand loyalty. This hierarchical perspective suggests that awareness must precede attitude formation and purchase behavior, emphasizing its role as the necessary but not sufficient condition for brand success. The model also highlights the sequential nature of brand building, where awareness serves as the platform upon which more sophisticated brand relationships can be built (Upadhyay et al., 2022).

The strategic implications of brand awareness extend beyond mere recognition. In competitive markets, achieving salience - the prominence or level of activation of the brand in consumer memory - becomes crucial. Brands must not only be recognized but must also be readily accessible in consumer memory at the right time and in the right context. This accessibility is particularly important given the increasing complexity of modern marketing environments and the proliferation of brand choices across categories (Chandon et al., 2022).

Digital transformation has significantly impacted the dynamics of brand awareness building. The traditional methods of creating awareness through mass media advertising have been complemented, and in some cases replaced, by digital channels that offer more targeted and interactive approaches. Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as powerful tools for building brand awareness, offering unprecedented opportunities for brands to engage with consumers and create memorable brand experiences (Matarazzo et al., 2021).

The measurement of brand awareness has evolved to accommodate these changing market dynamics. Traditional metrics such as top-of-mind awareness, spontaneous awareness, and aided recall continue to provide valuable insights, but they are now supplemented by digital metrics that track online brand mentions, social media engagement, and search engine visibility. This evolution in measurement approaches reflects the growing complexity of brand awareness in the multi-channel world (Borkovsky et al., 2017).

The relationship between brand awareness and brand equity represents another critical theoretical dimension. Brand awareness contributes to brand equity not only through its direct effects on consumer choice but also through its role in facilitating the development of brand associations. Strong brand awareness can create the sense of familiarity with the brand, which can trigger positive feelings and serve as the basis for brand trust and loyalty (Liu et al., 2017).

Cultural factors significantly influence the development and maintenance of brand awareness. Different cultural contexts may require varying approaches to building brand awareness, as symbols, meanings, and communication styles can differ markedly across cultures. Global brands must navigate these cultural nuances while maintaining consistency in their core brand identity, presenting the complex challenge in international brand management (Foroudi, 2019).

The role of brand awareness in service markets presents unique characteristics compared to product markets. Services' intangible nature makes brand awareness particularly crucial as the risk reduction mechanism. Consumers often rely more heavily on brand awareness when evaluating services due to the difficulty in assessing service quality prior to purchase (Hole et al., 2018).

Innovation in brand awareness strategies has led to the emergence of new approaches such as content marketing, influencer partnerships, and experiential marketing. These approaches seek to create more meaningful and memorable brand encounters that facilitate stronger memory encoding and retrieval. The focus has shifted from mere exposure to creating engaging brand experiences that resonate with consumers on emotional and cognitive levels.

The concept of brand awareness has also expanded to encompass broader notions of brand salience and brand prominence. Modern theoretical perspectives recognize that awareness exists on the continuum rather than as the binary state, with varying levels of activation and accessibility in consumer memory. This nuanced understanding has important implications for brand strategy and measurement (Brexendorf & Keller, 2017).

Technological advancement has introduced new dimensions to brand awareness through augmented reality, virtual reality, and artificial intelligence applications. These technologies offer novel ways to create memorable brand experiences and maintain brand presence in increasingly digital consumer environments. The challenge for brands lies in effectively integrating these new tools while maintaining authentic and meaningful connections with consumers (Nalbant & Aydın, 2023).

The relationship between brand awareness and consumer decision-making has become more complex with the rise of digital decision-making tools and AI-powered recommendation systems. Brands must now consider how to maintain awareness and relevance in algorithmic environments while ensuring their presence remains meaningful to human consumers (Dihingia et al., 2024).

Looking toward the future, brand awareness continues to evolve as new media channels emerge and consumer behavior patterns shift. The challenge for brands lies in maintaining effective awareness in increasingly fragmented and noisy markets while ensuring that this awareness translates in meaningful brand relationships and business outcomes (Sharma & Verma, 2018).

The concept of brand awareness in the context of sustainability and social responsibility has gained prominence. Consumers increasingly expect brands to be not only commercially visible but also socially conscious and environmentally responsible. This has led to the emergence of new dimensions of brand awareness that incorporate ethical and sustainability considerations (Cowan & Guzman, 2020).

The psychological depth of brand awareness extends beyond simple recognition to include emotional and experiential components. Modern theoretical frameworks recognize that effective brand awareness encompasses not just cognitive recognition but also emotional resonance and experiential familiarity. This multidimensional understanding has important implications for how brands approach awareness-building strategies (Parris & Guzman, 2023).

Starbucks India has successfully utilized its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to enhance its brand awareness and establish itself as the socially responsible and community-focused brand. The company's commitment to environmental sustainability, such as reducing plastic waste, implementing recycling programs, and using sustainable materials in packaging, has gained attention from environmentally conscious consumers. The "Greener Stores" initiative, which focuses on creating energy-efficient, eco-friendly spaces, further amplifies this commitment (Blackwell et al., 2018).

One of Starbucks India's key CSR activities is its partnership with local farmers through ethical sourcing practices. This transparent approach strengthens the perception of Starbucks as the socially responsible business, making it the preferred choice for those who prioritize ethical and fair trade practices. Starbucks India has also been active in promoting gender equality through various CSR initiatives, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

The company offers healthier menu options, including low-calorie drinks and plant-based food items, appealing to the growing health-conscious demographic. These initiatives, combined with educational campaigns on balanced consumption, have boosted brand visibility and consumer engagement.

Starbucks India's employees actively engage in community service through initiatives like "Starbucks Shared Planet," which promotes volunteering, educational outreach, and disaster relief. This not only enhances the company's brand image as the socially responsible corporation but also generates visibility through employee-driven efforts and media coverage.

Starbucks India has effectively used social media and digital platforms to amplify its CSR initiatives. The company runs campaigns highlighting its sustainability goals, community work, and local partnerships, creating the strong connection with its audience. Starbucks India has gained recognition for its timely response to various social and environmental issues, demonstrating its commitment to social good alongside business goals.

3.3 Brand Association

Brand association stands as one of the most fundamental concepts in modern marketing theory and practice, representing the complex web of mental connections that consumers form with brands. At its core, brand association encompasses all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, images, experiences, beliefs, and attitudes that become linked to the brand in the consumer's mind. These associations serve as the building blocks of brand equity and play the crucial role in shaping consumer behavior, purchase decisions, and long-term brand loyalty (Kimmel, 2018).

The evolution of brand association theory can be traced back to the fundamental principles of cognitive psychology, particularly the associative network memory model. This model suggests that human memory consists of interconnected nodes that form complex networks of associations. When applied to branding, this theoretical framework helps explain how consumers store and retrieve brand-related information, and how these mental connections influence their decision-making processes (Kumar, 2021).

Brand associations can be categorized into several distinct dimensions, each contributing uniquely to the overall brand image. Product-related associations focus on the functional attributes and benefits of the brand's offerings, such as quality, performance, and reliability. These associations form the rational foundation upon which consumers evaluate brands and make purchase decisions. For instance, luxury automotive brands often cultivate associations with superior engineering, technology, and exceptional performance (Jin et al., 2019).

Non-product-related associations, on the other hand, encompass intangible elements such as user imagery, usage situations, brand personality, and emotional benefits. These associations create deeper emotional connections between consumers and brands, often transcending the mere functional aspects of products or services. Consider how certain beverage brands have successfully associated themselves with moments of happiness, celebration, or social connection, creating powerful emotional bonds that extend far beyond the physical properties of their products (Hodson, 2021).

The strength of brand associations plays the pivotal role in determining their impact on consumer behavior. Strong associations are characterized by their immediacy and accessibility in consumers' minds, formed through consistent brand communications, direct experiences, and repeated exposures. When consumers encounter multiple consistent messages about the brand across various touchpoints, these associations become more firmly embedded in their memory networks, leading to more favorable brand responses (Coelho et al., 2018).

Favorability represents another crucial dimension of brand associations. Favorable associations contribute positively to brand equity and influence consumer preferences. However, the development of favorable associations depends largely on whether consumers believe the brand can satisfy their needs and wants effectively. This belief is shaped by both the relevance and distinctiveness of the associations. Brands must not only create associations that matter to their target audience but also ensure these associations differentiate them from competitors (Ishaq & Di Maria, 2020).

The uniqueness of brand associations serves as the key source of competitive advantage. Unique associations help brands stand out in crowded marketplaces and provide compelling reasons for consumers to choose one brand over another. These distinctive associations often emerge from the brand's heritage, special product features, or innovative marketing approaches. The most successful brands have managed to own certain associations in their categories, making them nearly impossible for competitors to replicate (Panda et al., 2019).

Brand associations also vary in their level of abstraction. Concrete associations relate to specific product attributes or features, while abstract associations connect to broader concepts or values. This hierarchy of associations demonstrates how brands can build meaning at multiple levels, from functional benefits to symbolic values. For example, the technology brand might build associations ranging from specific product features to broader concepts like innovation, creativity, and empowerment (Zhou et al., 2021).

The role of brand associations in consumer decision-making cannot be overstated. These mental connections serve as mental shortcuts, helping consumers process and evaluate information more efficiently. When faced with purchase decisions, consumers often rely on their stored associations to make quick judgments about brands, particularly in situations where detailed product comparison is impractical or time-consuming. Strong, favorable associations can therefore significantly influence choice behavior and reduce the cognitive effort required in decision-making (Taylor et al., 2024).

Cultural context plays the significant role in shaping brand associations. The same brand can evoke different associations across different cultural contexts, requiring marketers to carefully consider cultural nuances in their brand-building efforts. This cultural dimension of brand associations has become increasingly important in today's globalized marketplace, where brands must navigate diverse cultural landscapes while maintaining consistency in their core identity (Buschgens et al., 2019).

The dynamic nature of brand associations presents both challenges and opportunities for brand managers. While strong associations can provide valuable competitive advantages, they can also become liabilities if market conditions or consumer preferences change. Successful brands must therefore continuously monitor and manage their associations, ensuring they remain relevant and positive while adapting to market dynamics (Veloutsou & Guzman, 2017).

The digital age has introduced new complexities to the management of brand associations. Social media and online communities have democratized the process of association formation, with consumers playing an increasingly active role in creating and sharing brand meanings. This shift has reduced brands' control over their associations while increasing the importance of authentic, consistent brand experiences across all touchpoints (Mariani & Wamba, 2020).

Brand associations also play the crucial role in brand extension strategies. Strong, positive associations can facilitate the successful introduction of new products under the same brand name by transferring favorable associations to new offerings. However, poorly conceived extensions can dilute existing associations or create conflicting ones, potentially damaging the parent brand's equity (Johnson et al., 2019).

The measurement and monitoring of brand associations represent critical aspects of brand management. Various techniques have been developed to map and assess brand associations, including qualitative methods like free association tests and projective techniques, as well as quantitative approaches such as semantic differential scales and multidimensional scaling. These measurement tools help brands understand the current state of their associations and track changes over time (Heding et al., 2020).

Secondary brand associations, derived from linking the brand to other entities such as countries, events, spokespersons, or other brands, represent another important dimension of brand association theory. These secondary associations can help brands quickly establish credibility or transfer desirable associations from well-established entities to their own brand. However, this strategy also carries risks, as negative associations can transfer just as easily as positive ones (Tian et al., 2022).

The concept of brand association networks highlights the interconnected nature of brand associations. Rather than existing as isolated mental connections, associations form complex networks where different elements reinforce and influence each other. Understanding these networks helps marketers develop more cohesive and effective brand-building strategies that leverage the synergistic effects of multiple associations (Swaminathan et al., 2020).

Brand associations also play the crucial role in brand positioning strategies. Effective positioning requires brands to create and maintain associations that not only resonate with target consumers but also differentiate the brand from competitors. This involves carefully selecting which associations to emphasize and how to communicate them consistently across all marketing activities (Iyer et al., 2019).

The temporal dimension of brand associations deserves attention, as associations can evolve over time through both planned marketing efforts and uncontrolled external factors. Historic brands often benefit from rich associations built over decades, while new brands must work to establish meaningful associations in increasingly competitive markets (Plessis et al., 2024).

Beyond individual consumers, brand associations also operate at collective levels, creating shared meanings within consumer communities. These collective associations contribute to brand culture and can become self-sustaining through social interaction and shared experiences. Understanding how these collective associations form and evolve is crucial for brands seeking to build communities around products or services (Black & Veloutsou, 2017).

The impact of brand associations extends beyond purchase behavior to influence other important marketing outcomes. Strong, positive associations can enhance brand loyalty, support premium pricing strategies, facilitate brand extensions, and provide resilience during brand crises. They also play the crucial role in word-of-mouth marketing, as consumers are more likely to recommend brands with which they have strong, positive associations (Mathew & Soliman, 2021).

Brand associations also interact with other elements of brand knowledge, particularly brand awareness. While awareness represents the strength of the brand's presence in memory, associations determine the nature and quality of that presence. Together, these elements create the foundation of brand equity, influencing how consumers perceive and respond to marketing activities (Theurer et al., 2018).

Looking to the future, the management of brand associations faces new challenges and opportunities. The increasing importance of sustainability and social responsibility means brands must carefully manage associations related to their environmental and social impact. Additionally, the rise of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technologies opens new possibilities for creating and reinforcing brand associations through immersive experiences (Sander et al., 2021).

Starbucks India has built the strong brand association through its commitment to ethical practices, sustainability, and social empowerment. By partnering with local coffee farmers and promoting fair trade, Starbucks has developed an image of quality and responsibility, connecting the brand with fairness and transparency. This association with ethical sourcing elevates the perception of the brand's coffee and connects the Starbucks name with ethically-conscious customers who value sustainability and social good (Kotler et al., 2018).

Starbucks India's environmental initiatives have strongly influenced how the brand is perceived in the Indian market. Eco-conscious practices, such as using recyclable cups, promoting reusable mugs, and minimizing waste in operations, have solidified its association with environmental sustainability. Customers who prioritize eco-friendly choices associate the Starbucks brand with positive environmental impact, aligning it with sustainability movements.

Starbucks India's focus on supporting local communities and farmers through educational programs, technical assistance, and infrastructure development has created the deep sense of community involvement around the brand. By empowering farmers with resources and ensuring fair trade, Starbucks has built the reputation as the brand that cares about uplifting communities and fostering socio-economic growth. This association with community development resonates particularly with consumers who are drawn to brands that actively contribute to the welfare of local economies and rural areas.

Starbucks India's CSR efforts to empower women through skill development programs and creating job opportunities, especially in rural areas, have significantly influenced brand association. The company's focus on gender equality and women's advancement in the workplace aligns it with modern values of inclusivity and women's rights.

Starbucks India's quick response to natural disasters, such as providing aid and financial support to affected communities, has helped build the strong association with compassion and solidarity. This crisis management approach strengthens the emotional connection between the brand and its customers, enhancing loyalty and positive sentiment.

The brand association remains the central concept in brand management, representing the complex psychological connections that drive consumer-brand relationships. Understanding how these associations form, evolve, and influence consumer behavior is crucial for building and maintaining strong brands in today's dynamic marketplace. As the marketing landscape continues to evolve, the ability to create and manage meaningful brand associations will remain the key determinant of brand success.

3.4 Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty stands as one of the most enduring and crucial concepts in marketing and business strategy, representing the holy grail of customer relationships that organizations consistently strive to achieve. The evolution of customer loyalty as the concept mirrors the development of marketing thought itself, transforming from the simple repeat purchase behavior to the complex, multidimensional construct that encompasses both behavioral and attitudinal elements (Itani et al., 2019).

The journey of understanding customer loyalty began in the early days of marketing theory, where it was primarily viewed through the lens of repeat purchase behavior. This simplistic view considered the customer loyal if they continued to buy from the same brand or organization over time. However, this behavioral-only perspective failed to capture the psychological depth of why customers remain loyal to certain brands while easily switching away from others (Siebert et al., 2020).

As marketing thought evolved, researchers began to recognize that true customer loyalty encompasses more than just repeated transactions. The concept expanded to include psychological attachment, emotional commitment, and positive attitudes toward the brand. This broader understanding led to the recognition of different types of loyalty, from purely behavioral loyalty driven by convenience or habit, to deeply emotional loyalty based on strong psychological bonds with the brand (Steward et al., 2019).

Modern understanding of customer loyalty recognizes it as the multifaceted construct that operates on several levels simultaneously. At its foundation lies behavioral loyalty, manifested through repeat purchases, increased share of wallet, and longer customer lifetime value. However, the more profound and valuable dimension is attitudinal loyalty, characterized by emotional attachment, brand advocacy, and resistance to competition (Diallo et al., 2021).

The interplay between behavioral and attitudinal loyalty creates different loyalty states. Some customers may display high behavioral loyalty but low attitudinal attachment, resulting in what scholars term as "spurious loyalty" - the temporary state often maintained by switching costs or lack of alternatives. Conversely, customers might harbor strong positive attitudes toward the brand but show limited purchase behavior due to various constraints, creating "latent loyalty." (Zhang & Zhang, 2021)

True loyalty emerges when both behavioral and attitudinal components align, creating the strong, resilient relationship between customer and brand. This premium form of loyalty not only ensures consistent purchase behavior but also transforms customers into brand advocates who actively promote and defend the brand within their social circles (Hossain & Kibria, 2024).

Customer satisfaction, while necessary, is not sufficient alone to guarantee loyalty. The satisfaction-loyalty relationship is non-linear, with satisfaction needing to reach certain thresholds before translating into loyal behavior. Moreover, even highly satisfied customers may switch brands due to variety-seeking or competitive actions (Kigen & Villiers, 2024).

Trust emerges as another crucial foundation for customer loyalty. Built through consistent positive experiences and fulfilled promises, trust creates the psychological safety necessary for customers to maintain long-term relationships with brands. When customers trust the brand, they're more likely to forgive service failures and resist other offerings (Cardoso et al., 2022).

Perceived value plays the pivotal role in loyalty formation. This goes beyond mere price-quality comparisons to encompass emotional, social, and functional benefits derived from the relationship with the brand. Brands that deliver superior value across multiple dimensions are more likely to cultivate strong customer loyalty (Paulose & Shakeel, 2022).

The emergence of customer experience management has added new dimensions to understanding loyalty formation. Every interaction between customer and brand, whether direct or indirect, contributes to the overall experience that shapes loyalty. Superior customer experiences create emotional connections and memorable moments that strengthen the bond between customer and brand (Kranzbühler et al., 2018).

The concept of "customer journey" has become central to understanding how loyalty develops over time. Different touchpoints along the customer journey contribute differently to loyalty formation, with some moments having disproportionate impact on long-term loyalty. These "moments of truth" require special attention in managing customer relationships (Herhausen et al., 2019).

Digital transformation has further complicated the customer experience landscape. Multiple channels and touchpoints must be seamlessly integrated to deliver consistent experiences that build rather than erode loyalty. The challenge of omnichannel experience management has become crucial in maintaining and strengthening customer loyalty in the digital age.

Loyalty programs represent one of the most visible manifestations of organizational efforts to build customer loyalty. These structured rewards systems aim to incentivize repeat purchase behavior while creating switching costs that help retain customers. However, their effectiveness in building true loyalty versus merely encouraging repeat purchases remains the subject of debate (Herhausen et al., 2019).

Successful loyalty programs go beyond simple transactional rewards to create emotional connections and deliver unique value propositions. Programs that combine monetary benefits with experiential rewards and recognition tend to be more effective in building lasting loyalty. The key lies in creating program benefits that are both valuable and difficult for competitors to replicate (Kim et al., 2021).

The evolution of loyalty programs reflects broader changes in customer expectations and technological capabilities. Modern programs leverage data analytics and personalization to deliver tailored experiences and rewards, moving beyond one-size-fits-all approaches to create more meaningful customer relationships (Chen et al., 2021).

The business case for customer loyalty rests on several well-documented economic benefits. Loyal customers typically cost less to serve, are more likely to try new products, and demonstrate lower price sensitivity. They also serve as brand advocates, providing valuable word-of-mouth marketing that can attract new customers at minimal cost (Kong et al., 2020).

The concept of customer lifetime value (CLV) provides the framework for quantifying the economic impact of loyalty. Loyal customers tend to have higher CLV through increased purchase frequency, higher average transaction values, and longer relationship durations. This makes investments in loyalty-building initiatives easier to justify from the financial perspective (Dandis & Al Haj Eid, 2022).

However, the costs of maintaining customer loyalty must also be considered. Investments in service quality, loyalty programs, and customer experience management can be substantial. Organizations must carefully balance the benefits of increased loyalty against the costs of achieving and maintaining it (Ali & Shabn, 2024).

The digital age has brought new challenges to building and maintaining customer loyalty. Increased market transparency and reduced switching costs make it easier for customers to compare alternatives and change providers. Social media and online reviews have amplified the impact of both positive and negative experiences on loyalty.

The rise of the sharing economy and subscription-based business models has changed how customers think about loyalty. Traditional loyalty metrics may need to be reconsidered in light of these new consumption patterns. Additionally, younger generations show different loyalty behaviors compared to their predecessors, requiring organizations to adapt their loyalty-building strategies (Lindström et al., 2024).

Looking ahead, customer loyalty continues to evolve with changing market dynamics and customer expectations. The integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning offers new opportunities for understanding and predicting loyalty behaviors. Real-time analytics and predictive modeling can help organizations identify loyalty risks and opportunities before they materialize (Zhang & Chang, 2021).

Sustainability and social responsibility are emerging as important factors in loyalty formation, particularly among younger consumers. Brands that align with customer values and demonstrate genuine commitment to social and environmental causes may find it easier to build lasting loyalty relationships (Dabija, 2018).

The concept of "ecosystem loyalty" is gaining prominence as organizations expand beyond traditional product and service boundaries. Customers may become loyal to entire ecosystems of complementary products and services, raising the stakes for organizations trying to maintain competitive advantage through customer relationships (Zou et al., 2023).

Starbucks India's commitment to sustainability, community empowerment, and ethical practices has built the strong sense of brand loyalty among eco-conscious consumers. The company's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint, using recyclable materials, and promoting the use of reusable cups through incentives resonates deeply with customers who prioritize sustainability. Starbucks's commitment to ethical sourcing (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Through various community-focused CSR programs, Starbucks India has created the strong sense of local engagement, encouraging customers to feel that their continued patronage contributes to the betterment of their own communities. This positive impact on society encourages consumers to feel that their continued patronage contributes to the betterment of their own communities, which in turn strengthens customer loyalty.

Starbucks India's focus on gender equality and women's empowerment has significantly contributed to customer loyalty, especially among socially conscious consumers. By supporting initiatives aimed at improving women's access to education and employment in underserved areas, Starbucks has positioned itself as the brand that cares about social equity. This commitment to women's empowerment fosters the sense of admiration and loyalty among customers passionate about gender equality, reinforcing their connection to the brand.

Customer-centric engagement is another key aspect of Starbucks India's CSR activities. The company has run campaigns encouraging customers to participate in environmental initiatives, such as reducing waste or contributing to local causes. These initiatives not only make customers feel more involved but also reinforce the sense of shared purpose with the brand.

Corporate giving and disaster relief have also positively impacted customer loyalty. Starbucks India's proactive response to natural disasters and its support for affected communities has built the strong bond with customers, as they feel their association with Starbucks contributes to positive change in society.

3.5 Brand Equity

Brand equity represents one of the most significant and enduring concepts in modern marketing theory and practice. It emerged as the pivotal construct during the 1980s when businesses began recognizing that brands were not merely identification symbols but valuable assets that could significantly influence consumer behavior and drive business value. The concept has since evolved into the multifaceted framework that encompasses both financial and consumer-based perspectives, making it the cornerstone of strategic brand management (Ishaq & Maria, 2020).

At its core, brand equity represents the added value that the brand name bestows upon the product or service beyond its functional benefits. This added value manifests in various ways, from consumer perceptions and attitudes to market behaviors and financial outcomes. The concept gained prominence as businesses realized that strong brands could command premium prices, enjoy higher market shares, and foster stronger customer loyalty compared to generic or lesser-known alternatives (Ferreiro-Rosende et al., 2023).

The complexity of brand equity lies in its dual nature - while it ultimately translates into financial value for organizations, it primarily resides in the minds of consumers. This duality has led to the development of various frameworks and approaches to understanding and measuring brand equity, with two dominant perspectives emerging: the financial perspective and the consumer-based perspective (Adewole, 2024).

The financial perspective views brand equity through the lens of monetary value, treating it as an asset that can be quantified on the company's balance sheet. This approach focuses on the premium earnings potential of branded products compared to unbranded alternatives, the cost savings in marketing activities due to established brand awareness and loyalty, and the potential for brand licensing and extension opportunities (Naidoo & Abratt, 2018).

The financial valuation of brand equity typically considers factors such as price premiums, licensing fees, market share, and the brand's contribution to reducing marketing costs. This perspective has been particularly valuable in mergers and acquisitions, where brand valuation plays the crucial role in determining company worth. However, while the financial perspective provides tangible metrics, it fails to capture the underlying consumer psychology that creates and sustains brand value (Kumar et al., 2020).

The Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model is the widely accepted framework for understanding brand equity, focusing on how consumers perceive and interact with the brand over time. The CBBE model is structured as the pyramid, illustrating the sequential building of brand equity through four key levels: Brand Identity (Brand Salience), Brand Meaning (Performance and Imagery), Brand Responses (Judgments and Feelings), and Brand Relationships (Brand Resonance) (Tasci, 2021).

Building strong brand equity requires establishing the right brand identity, creating appropriate brand meaning, eliciting positive brand responses, and forging strong brand relationships with customers. This process is both sequential and reciprocal, with each stage completed successfully before moving to the next (Keller, 2021).

Successfully implementing the CBBE model requires careful attention to several key areas, including brand elements, marketing programs, brand extensions, and brand architecture. The model suggests several approaches to measuring brand equity, including direct measures such as brand awareness metrics, brand association strength, favorability, and uniqueness, and indirect measures like market performance metrics, price premiums, market share, and profitability (Datta et al., 2017).

Brand equity is dynamic and requires constant nurturing, requiring consistent delivery on brand promises and adapting to changing consumer needs while maintaining brand essence. This involves reinforcement strategies, such as maintaining brand consistency, protecting brand sources of equity, fortifying the brand against competitors, fine-tuning supporting marketing programs, and revitalization strategies, such as expanding brand awareness, improving brand image, entering new markets, and repositioning the brand (Cottan-Nir, 2019).

Challenges in building and maintaining brand equity include changing market dynamics, evolving consumer preferences, new competitive entries, technological advances, shifting distribution channels, internal challenges such as short-term financial pressures, organizational changes, marketing budget constraints, global considerations, cultural differences, market development variations, local competition, and regulatory environments (Veloutsou, 2023).

Starbucks India has successfully utilized its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to enhance its brand equity, making it one of the most respected and recognized brands in the Indian market. By incorporating social, environmental, and ethical values into its core business operations, Starbucks India has created the strong, positive brand perception that contributes directly to its brand equity (Lee & Kotler, 2019).

Starbucks India's commitment to creating the positive social impact has been instrumental in strengthening its brand equity. CSR initiatives such as supporting rural education, empowering women, and fostering local communities have helped establish Starbucks as the brand that values social responsibility. This resonates with the growing segment of Indian consumers who prefer brands that actively contribute to societal welfare.

Starbucks India's robust sustainability efforts, including eco-friendly packaging, reducing waste, and promoting energy-efficient stores, have played the pivotal role in enhancing its brand equity. As Indian consumers become more environmentally conscious, the association of Starbucks with sustainability boosts its image as the brand that prioritizes the planet. This alignment with global environmental movements adds to the brand's value, making it the trusted and respected entity in the competitive coffee market.

Starbucks India's focus on creating the positive work environment for its employees and involving them in CSR initiatives plays the key role in strengthening its brand equity. Employees who are engaged and motivated to support company's CSR efforts become brand ambassadors, positively influencing consumer perceptions and contributing to brand equity.

Starbucks India's ability to respond effectively to social and environmental challenges has contributed to its brand resilience and equity. For example, during natural disasters, the company provided aid and support to affected communities, reinforcing its image as the responsible corporate entity.

Brand equity remains the central concept in marketing theory and practice, with the CBBE model providing the comprehensive framework for understanding its development and management. The model's emphasis on the consumer perspective aligns with modern marketing's customer-centric orientation while providing practical guidance for brand building and management. The future of brand equity will likely see continued evolution in response to technological advancement, changing consumer expectations, and global market dynamics.

4. Practical Part

This study examines the relationship between Starbucks India's Corporate Social Responsibility activities and brand equity through brand awareness, brand association, and customer loyalty. Based on Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity model, a cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from 220 Starbucks customers in India. The survey measures demographic questions and five constructs using a five-point Likert scale.

4.1 Starbucks India

Starbucks entered the Indian market in October 2012 through a 50/50 joint venture with Tata Global Beverages. Operating under the brand name "Starbucks Coffee, The Tata Alliance", Tata Starbucks Private Limited now oversees more than 200 stores across major cities including Mumbai, Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru, Chandigarh, Pune, and Kolkata. With a workforce of over 2,000 dedicated employees, the company has established itself as a key player in India's premium coffee market (Vattikoti & Razak, 2018).

The Indian market posed unique challenges for Starbucks, requiring significant localization of offerings and strategies. Despite being a globally renowned brand, Starbucks had to adapt to Indian consumer preferences, including introducing smaller portion sizes and customizing flavors like masala chai and filter coffee.

This localization strategy has been instrumental in bridging the gap between Starbucks' global brand identity and local consumer expectations, contributing to the brand's steady growth. The joint venture with Tata not only facilitated market entry but also strengthened Starbucks' supply chain through Tata Coffee's high-quality beans, fostering a unique blend of global expertise and local sourcing.

Starbucks India's CSR strategy begins with localized efforts to engage with and uplift communities. By collaborating with neighborhood non-profits and establishing community stores, the company directly addresses local needs as shown in Figure 2.

These initiatives are financially supported through a portion of every sale, with Starbucks contributing between \$0.5 and \$0.15 per transaction to amplify their impact. Furthermore, the company champions workplace diversity and inclusion, actively hiring veterans and military personnel to create opportunities for underrepresented groups.

In addition to these measures, Starbucks also emphasizes fostering a sense of community within its stores. Initiatives like "Coffee with a Cause" allow customers to contribute to local community projects through their purchases, creating a sense of shared responsibility.

Starbucks' community stores are designed not only as places for business but also as hubs for social interaction, aligning with its mission of building a positive social impact. By engaging customers directly in its CSR efforts, Starbucks fosters stronger emotional connections and cultivates customer loyalty through a shared commitment to societal betterment.

Figure 2 - Starbucks India's CSR Activities



Source: Developed by Author

Ethical sourcing lies at the core of Starbucks India's CSR philosophy. Through the Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E.) Practices program, Starbucks ensures that coffee farmers receive fair wages, technical training, and support to improve crop quality.

Partnering with Tata Coffee, the company sources a significant portion of its beans from Coorg, empowering Indian farmers and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. Notably, over 75% of the coffee used in Starbucks India stores is ethically sourced, demonstrating the company's unwavering dedication to sustainability and fair trade.

To further reinforce its ethical sourcing practices, Starbucks regularly audits its supply chain to ensure compliance with its rigorous standards. These audits evaluate environmental sustainability, labor conditions, and community impact, ensuring that all stakeholders benefit from the sourcing arrangements.

The company also invests in coffee farmer training programs, offering workshops on sustainable farming techniques and crop diversification to mitigate risks associated with climate change. This proactive approach ensures a steady supply of high-quality coffee while enhancing the livelihoods of local farmers, cementing Starbucks' reputation as a socially responsible brand.

Sustainability is central to Starbucks India's operations, with a focus on reducing waste, conserving water, and optimizing energy consumption. As part of its "Greener Stores" initiative, Starbucks has incorporated eco-friendly designs, water-saving fixtures, and waste-reducing measures in its outlets.

Since 2012, the company has prioritized eliminating single-use plastics, culminating in its commitment to transition all Indian stores to compostable and recyclable packaging by World Environment Day in 2019. Initiatives like compostable wooden cutlery, splash sticks, and paper cups reflect the company's 30-year legacy of environmental responsibility.

Starbucks also collaborates with government-approved recyclers under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Plan to manage waste effectively, encouraging customers and partners to participate in programs such as 'Grounds for Your Garden' and 'No Paper Bill' for added impact, this are the part of their vision as presented in Figure 3.

Starbucks' sustainability efforts extend beyond operational changes to involve educational campaigns aimed at increasing awareness about environmental conservation among customers and partners. These campaigns include workshops on recycling, upcycling used coffee grounds, and promoting reusable cups.

Starbucks also encourages its employees to take part in eco-initiatives like tree planting drives and lake clean-up events. By involving all stakeholders in its sustainability journey, Starbucks not only reduces its environmental footprint but also fosters a culture of responsibility and awareness, ensuring that its efforts have a lasting impact.

Starbucks India actively engages in programs aimed at social upliftment. Through the Starbucks Foundation, the company supports initiatives focused on youth education and job training. Women's empowerment is another key focus, with programs in rural areas that provide education, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurial support.

In collaboration with Tata STRIVE, Starbucks India runs vocational training centers that equip underprivileged youth with skills to secure employment. These centers focus on imparting both technical and soft skills, enabling participants to build sustainable careers. The company also works with grassroots organizations to identify talented women entrepreneurs and provides them with the necessary resources and mentorship to scale their businesses.

Figure 3 - Starbucks India's CSR Vision



Source: Tata Consumer Article (2024)

Starbucks India prioritizes customer wellness by offering healthier menu options, including plant-based drinks and snacks. The company encourages mindful coffee consumption and raises awareness about the environmental and health impacts of dietary choices. By expanding its product offerings to align with evolving consumer preferences, Starbucks reinforces its commitment to customer well-being.

To further promote health-conscious living, Starbucks hosts workshops and events that educate customers on balanced nutrition and sustainable consumption habits. These initiatives include collaborations with nutritionists and dieticians to develop new menu items and provide resources on healthy eating.

Starbucks also supports fitness-oriented campaigns, such as "Move with Coffee," which encourage customers to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. Through these programs, Starbucks positions itself as a brand that not only serves quality products but also contributes to the overall wellness of its customers.

Starbucks India has consistently provided aid to communities affected by natural disasters, ensuring rapid response through financial support, resource allocation, and collaboration with NGOs. These efforts reflect the company's ethos of compassion and its role as a responsible corporate citizen, striving to rehabilitate disaster-stricken areas.

In addition to direct financial aid, Starbucks leverages its extensive network to mobilize resources during emergencies. The company often conducts fundraising campaigns in collaboration with its customers, where proceeds from select sales are donated to disaster relief.

Starbucks also trains its partners in emergency response protocols, enabling them to provide on-ground assistance during crises. By combining financial support with active involvement, Starbucks demonstrates a holistic approach to humanitarian aid, ensuring that affected communities receive timely and effective support.

Starbucks India exemplifies the evolution of CSR from a peripheral activity to a strategic imperative integral to its operations. By embedding ethical, environmental, and social considerations into its business model, the company creates shared value for all stakeholders.

The future of Starbucks' CSR initiatives lies in driving transformative change, leveraging technology for social good, and building meaningful partnerships. This vision underscores the company's commitment to sustainability, inclusivity, and societal progress, ensuring Starbucks remains a positive force in the lives of its customers and communities alike.

Looking ahead, Starbucks India aims to expand its CSR footprint by investing in innovative projects that address emerging social and environmental challenges. This includes exploring renewable energy solutions for its operations, launching AI-driven initiatives to optimize resource usage, and developing programs that address urban sustainability.

4.2 Demographic Analysis

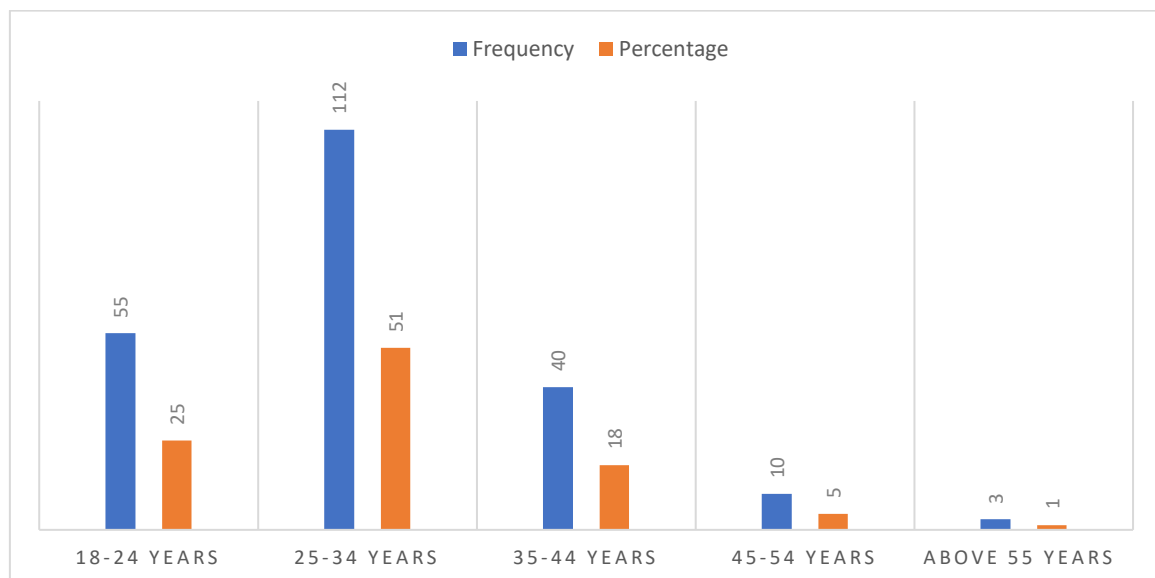
The majority of respondents (51%) are aged between 25-34 years, indicating that this demographic represents the largest consumer base for Starbucks in India as shown in Graph 1. A significant portion of respondents (25%) also falls within the 18-24 age group, suggesting a strong presence of young adults. Meanwhile, individuals aged 35-44 years constitute 18%, while those aged 45 and above collectively account for only 6%, demonstrating that Starbucks appeals predominantly to younger to middle-aged adults.

Table 1 - Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-24 Years	55	25
25-34 Years	112	51
35-44 Years	40	18
45-54 Years	10	5
Above 55 Years	3	1
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 1 - Age Group



Source: Based on own results

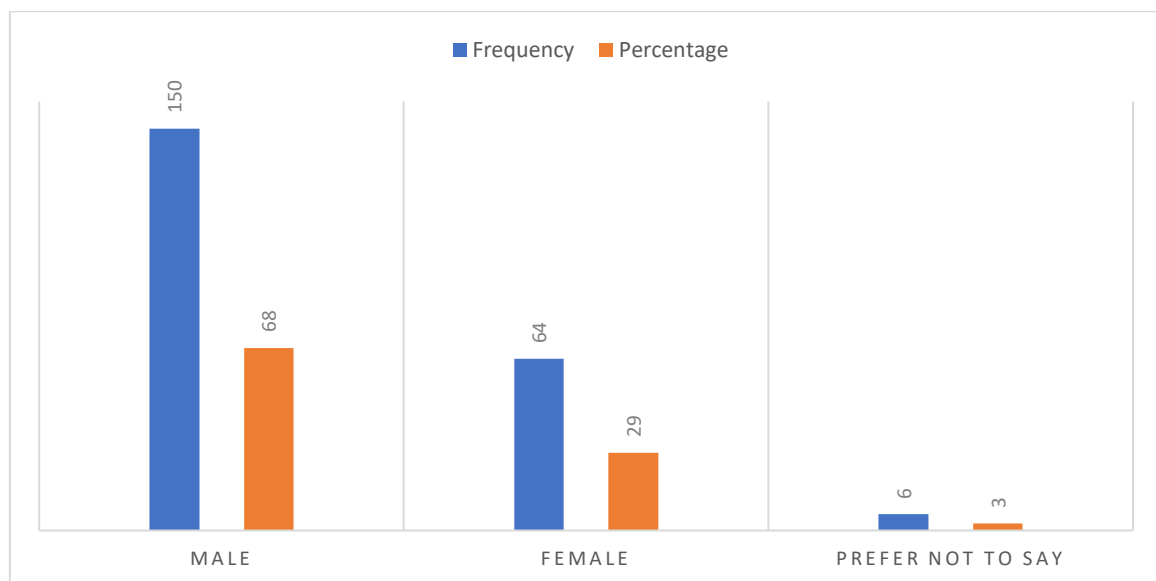
The data shows that male respondents (68%) significantly outnumber female respondents (29%), with 3% preferring not to disclose their gender as shown in Graph 2. This suggests that male customers may be more engaged with Starbucks in India, or more likely to respond to surveys. However, female customers also form a notable proportion of the demographic, which could influence branding and marketing strategies.

Table 2 - Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	150	68
Female	64	29
Prefer not to say	6	3
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 2 - Gender



Source: Based on own results

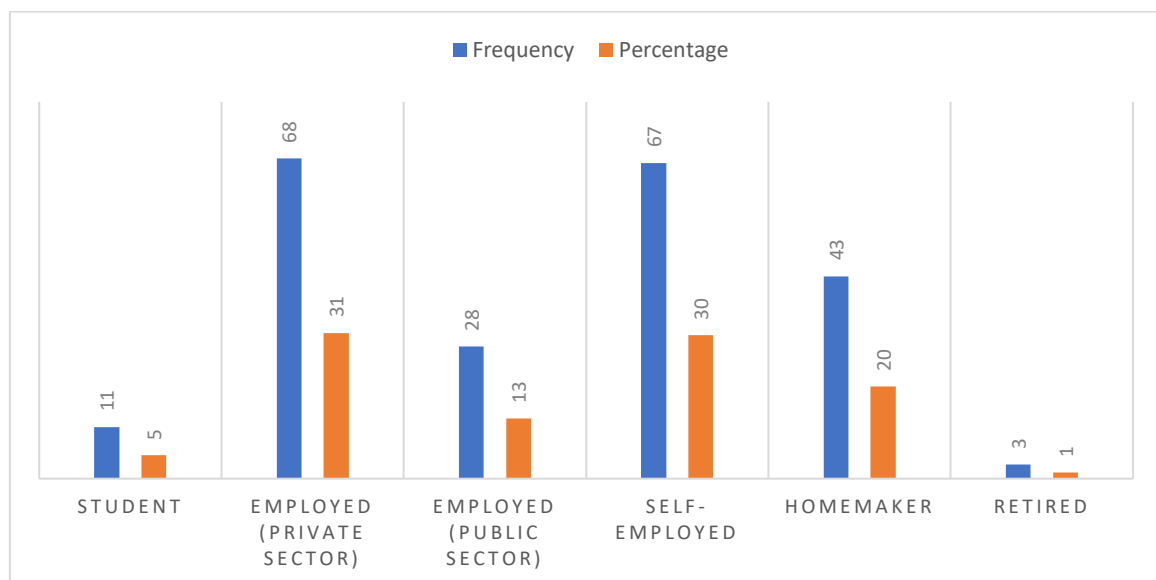
The occupational distribution indicates a diverse customer base, with the largest groups being employed in the private sector (31%) and self-employed (30%) as shown in Graph 3. Homemakers also make up a considerable portion at 20%, reflecting Starbucks' appeal to individuals managing households. Students account for 5% of the respondents, while those in public sector jobs represent 13%. Retired individuals (1%) are the least represented, suggesting that the brand's reach is lower among older, non-working demographics.

Table 3 - Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Student	11	5
Employed (Private Sector)	68	31
Employed (Public Sector)	28	13
Self-employed	67	30
Homemaker	43	20
Retired	3	1
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 3 - Occupation



Source: Based on own results

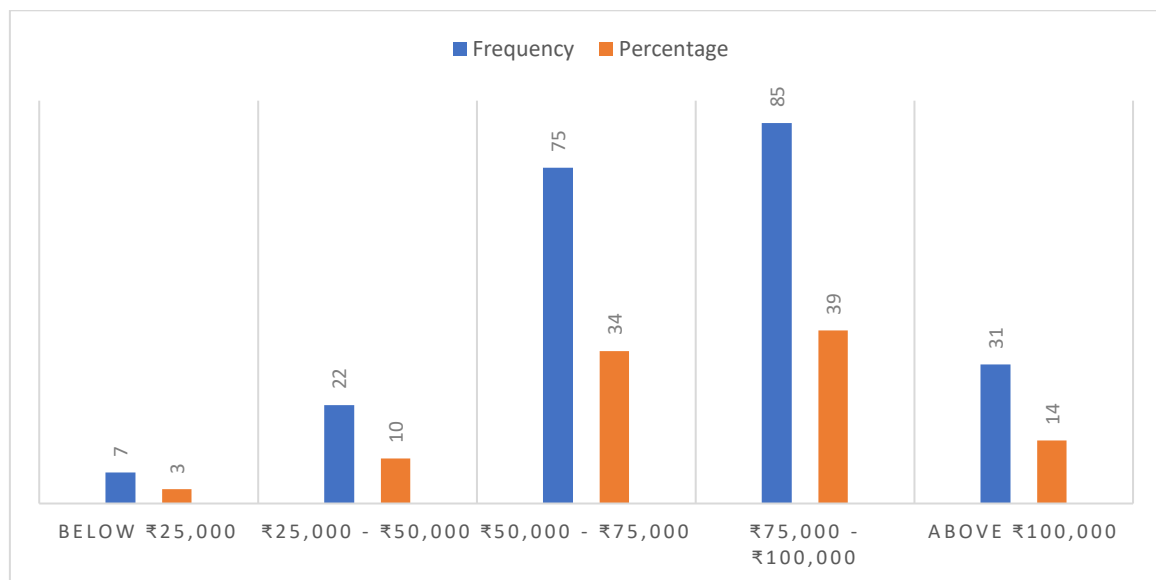
The majority of respondents (39%) report a monthly income between ₹75,000 and ₹100,000, followed by 34% earning ₹50,000-₹75,000. Higher income groups (above ₹100,000) constitute 14%, while only 13% earn below ₹50,000, as shown in Graph 4. This indicates that Starbucks primarily attracts customers in the middle to upper-income brackets, aligning with its premium pricing strategy and positioning as a lifestyle brand.

Table 4 - Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
Below ₹25,000	7	3
₹25,000 - ₹50,000	22	10
₹50,000 - ₹75,000	75	34
₹75,000 - ₹100,000	85	39
Above ₹100,000	31	14
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 4 - Monthly Income



Source: Based on own results

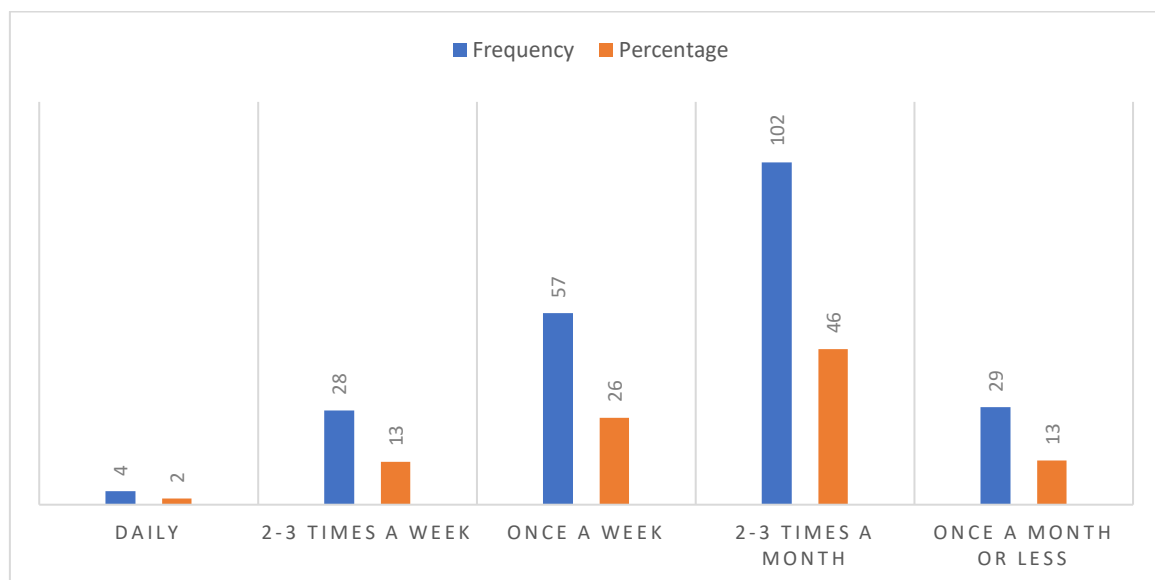
Nearly half of the respondents (46%) visit Starbucks 2-3 times a month, reflecting a pattern of moderate frequency among customers as shown in Graph 5. The significant proportion (26%) visits once a week, indicating a smaller segment of regular weekly patrons. Only 2% of respondents are daily visitors, while 13% each visit 2-3 times a week or less than once a month. This shows that while Starbucks has a loyal customer base, most prefer occasional visits rather than frequent ones.

Table 5 - Starbucks Visiting Frequency

Starbucks Visiting Frequency	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	4	2
2-3 times a week	28	13
Once a week	57	26
2-3 times a month	102	46
Once a month or less	29	13
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 5 - Starbucks Visiting Frequency



Source: Based on own results

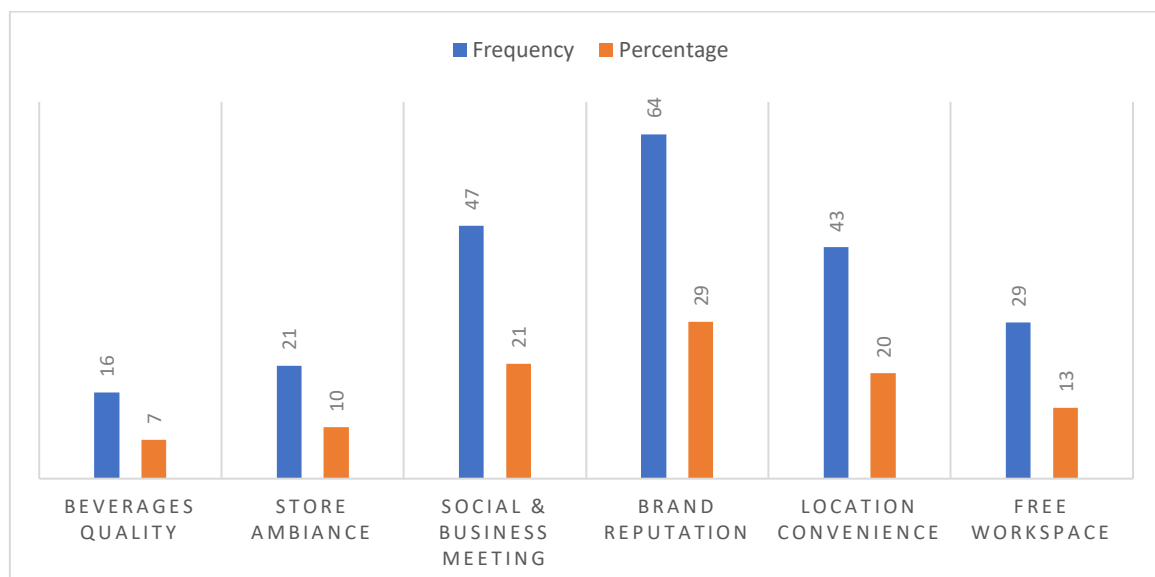
The leading motivation for visiting Starbucks is its brand reputation, cited by 29% of respondents. Social and business meetings follow closely at 21%, highlighting Starbucks as a preferred venue for networking and gatherings as shown in Graph 6. Location convenience (20%) and the availability of a free workspace (13%) also play a significant role in attracting customers. Beverage quality (7%) and store ambiance (10%) are lesser factors, suggesting that functional and brand-related attributes outweigh product-centric ones in motivating visits.

Table 6 - Starbucks Visiting Motivation

Starbucks Visiting Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
Beverages Quality	16	7
Store Ambiance	21	10
Social & Business Meeting	47	21
Brand Reputation	64	29
Location Convenience	43	20
Free Workspace	29	13
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 6 - Starbucks Visiting Motivation



Source: Based on own results

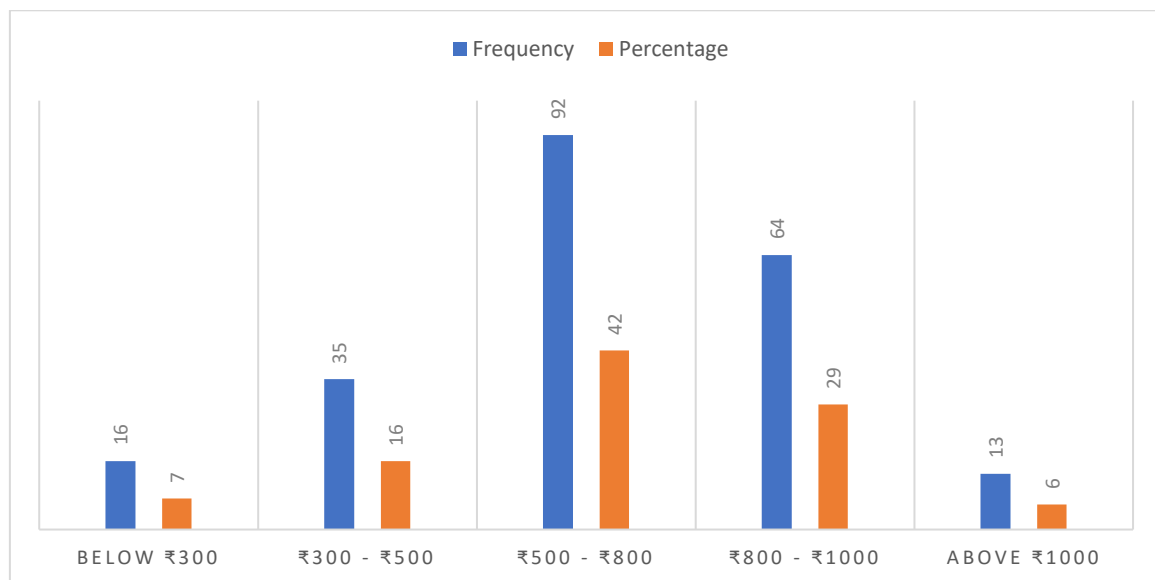
Most respondents (42%) spend ₹500-₹800 per visit, while 29% spend between ₹800-₹1000, showing that most customers fall into higher spending categories as shown in Graph 7. The smaller segment spends between ₹300-₹500 (16%), and only 7% spend below ₹300. The least proportion (6%) spends above ₹1000. These patterns align with Starbucks' positioning as a premium brand, appealing mainly to customers comfortable with higher spending.

Table 7 - Starbucks Spending Pattern

Starbucks Spending Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Below ₹300	16	7
₹300 - ₹500	35	16
₹500 - ₹800	92	42
₹800 - ₹1000	64	29
Above ₹1000	13	6
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 7 - Starbucks Spending Pattern



Source: Based on own results

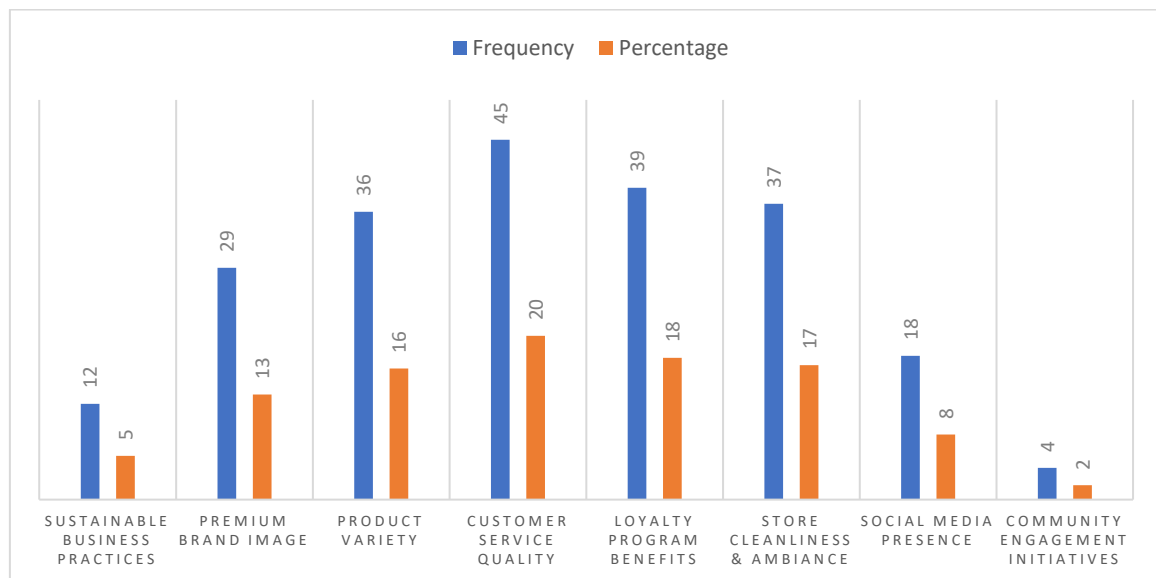
Customer service quality (20%) emerges as the most important driver of Starbucks' appeal, followed by loyalty program benefits (18%) and store cleanliness and ambiance (17%) as shown in Graph 8. Product variety (16%) is also significant, while premium brand image (13%) and social media presence (8%) hold a moderate influence. Sustainable business practices (5%) and community engagement (2%) have the least impact, indicating that functional and experiential factors dominate consumer preferences over ethical or social considerations.

Table 8 - Starbucks Choice Drivers

Starbucks Choice Drivers	Frequency	Percentage
Sustainable Business Practices	12	5
Premium Brand Image	29	13
Product Variety	36	16
Customer Service Quality	45	20
Loyalty Program Benefits	39	18
Store Cleanliness & Ambiance	37	17
Social Media Presence	18	8
Community Engagement Initiatives	4	2
Total	220	100

Source - Based on own results

Graph 8 - Starbucks Choice Drivers



Source: Based on own results

4.3 Descriptive Analysis

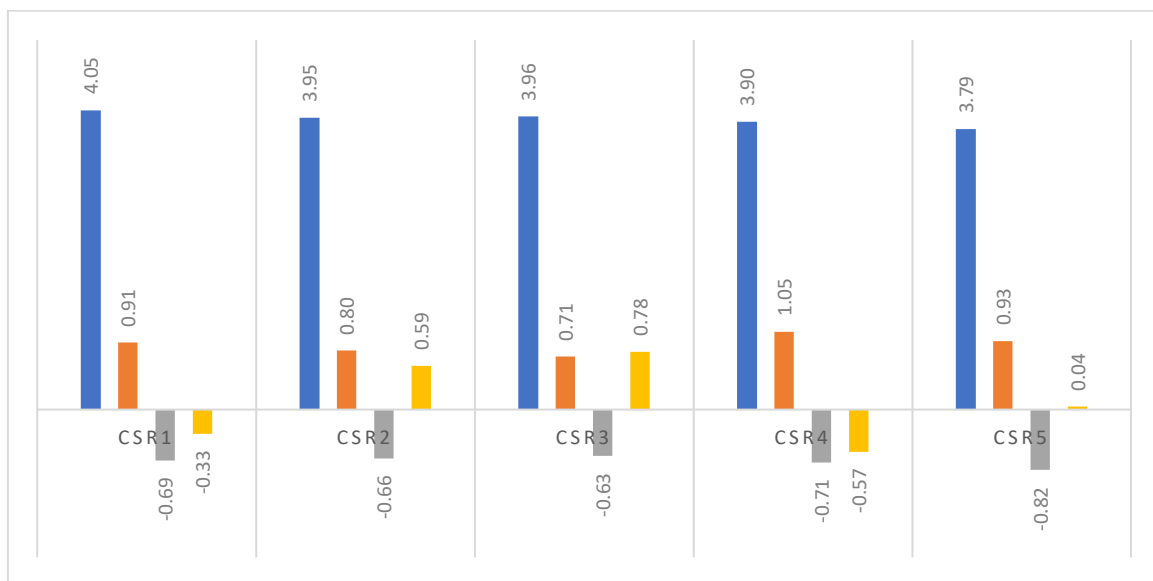
The respondents perceive Starbucks' CSR activities positively, with all mean scores above 3.75. Environmental protection initiatives (mean = 4.05) and ethical sourcing practices (mean = 3.95) are highly appreciated, showing strong alignment with customers' values as shown in Graph 9. Standard deviations range from 0.71 to 1.05, indicating moderate variation in responses. Negative skewness across all items suggests a general tendency toward higher agreement, while kurtosis values near zero indicate relatively normal distributions.

Table 9 - CSR Activities

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities					
Item	Description	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
CSR1	Environmental protection initiatives	4.05	0.91	-0.69	-0.33
CSR2	Ethical sourcing practices and fair trade	3.95	0.80	-0.66	0.59
CSR3	Local community development	3.96	0.71	-0.63	0.78
CSR4	Fair employment opportunities	3.90	1.05	-0.71	-0.57
CSR5	Supporting social causes	3.79	0.93	-0.82	0.04

Source - Based on own results

Graph 9 - CSR Activities



Source: Based on own results

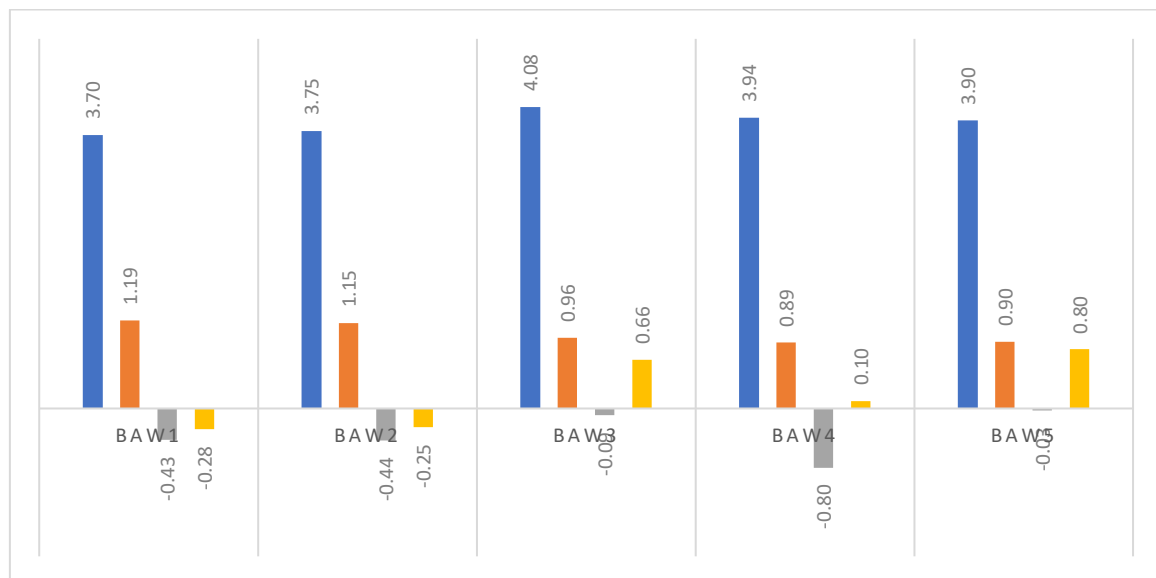
Brand awareness scores show high recognition of Starbucks' initiatives, with local community development receiving the highest mean (4.08). Other dimensions, such as fair employment opportunities (mean = 3.94) and support for social causes (mean = 3.90), are also well-rated, as shown in Graph 10. Standard deviations indicate low to moderate variability in opinions. Slightly negative skewness and low kurtosis values suggest the responses are centered around agreement with mild positive bias.

Table 10 - Brand Awareness

Brand Awareness					
Item	Description	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
BAW1	Environmental protection initiatives	3.70	1.19	-0.43	-0.28
BAW2	Ethical sourcing practices and fair trade	3.75	1.15	-0.44	-0.25
BAW3	Local community development	4.08	0.96	-0.09	0.66
BAW4	Fair employment opportunities	3.94	0.89	-0.80	0.10
BAW5	Supporting social causes	3.90	0.90	-0.03	0.80

Source - Based on own results

Graph 10 - Brand Awareness



Source: Based on own results

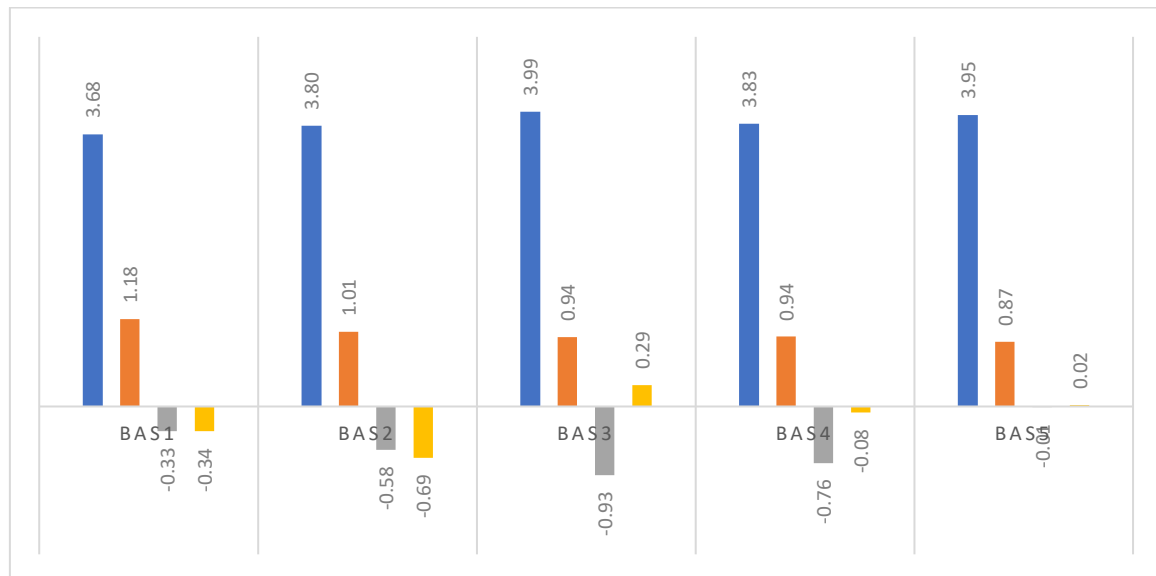
Respondents strongly associate Starbucks with a welcoming atmosphere (mean = 3.99) and ethical practices (mean = 3.95). Premium lifestyle and innovation also contribute positively, with mean scores above 3.8, as shown in Graph 11. Skewness values indicate a leftward tilt, reflecting stronger positive associations. Standard deviations are under 1.18, indicating consistency in perceptions. Overall, Starbucks' attributes are well-embedded in customer associations, with ethical and environmental factors playing key roles.

Table 11 - Brand Association

Brand Association					
Item	Description	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
BAS1	High-quality coffee and beverages	3.68	1.18	-0.33	-0.34
BAS2	Premium and sophisticated lifestyle	3.80	1.01	-0.58	-0.69
BAS3	Welcoming and comfortable atmosphere	3.99	0.94	-0.93	0.29
BAS4	Represents innovation	3.83	0.94	-0.76	-0.08
BAS5	Social responsibility & ethical practices	3.95	0.87	-0.01	0.02

Source - Based on own results

Graph 11 - Brand Association



Source: Based on own results

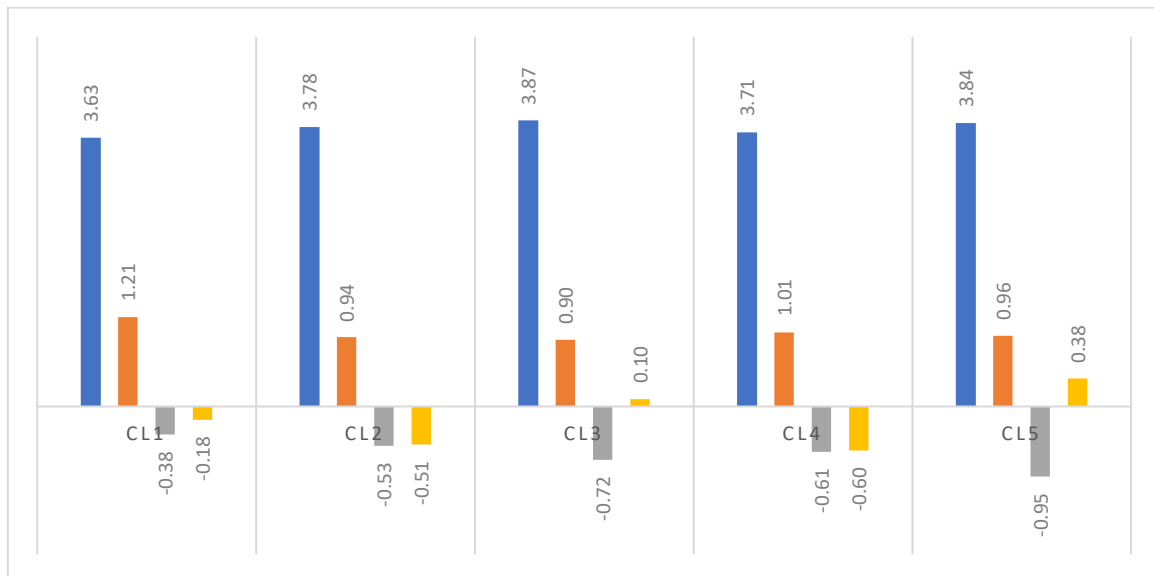
Customers exhibit favorable loyalty intentions, with the highest mean for participation in loyalty programs (3.84) and continued visiting intentions (3.87). Emotional attachment (mean = 3.71) and brand preference (mean = 3.63) are slightly lower but still positive, as shown in Graph 12. Responses show moderate variability, as reflected by standard deviations up to 1.21. Negative skewness suggests a leaning toward favorable loyalty, while kurtosis values near zero indicate balanced response distributions.

Table 12 - Customer Loyalty

Customer Loyalty					
Item	Description	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
CL1	Preference over other brands	3.63	1.21	-0.38	-0.18
CL2	Recommend to friends and family	3.78	0.94	-0.53	-0.51
CL3	Intention to continue visiting	3.87	0.90	-0.72	0.10
CL4	Emotional attachment	3.71	1.01	-0.61	-0.60
CL5	Participation in loyalty programs	3.84	0.96	-0.95	0.38

Source - Based on own results

Graph 12 - Customer Loyalty



Source: Based on own results

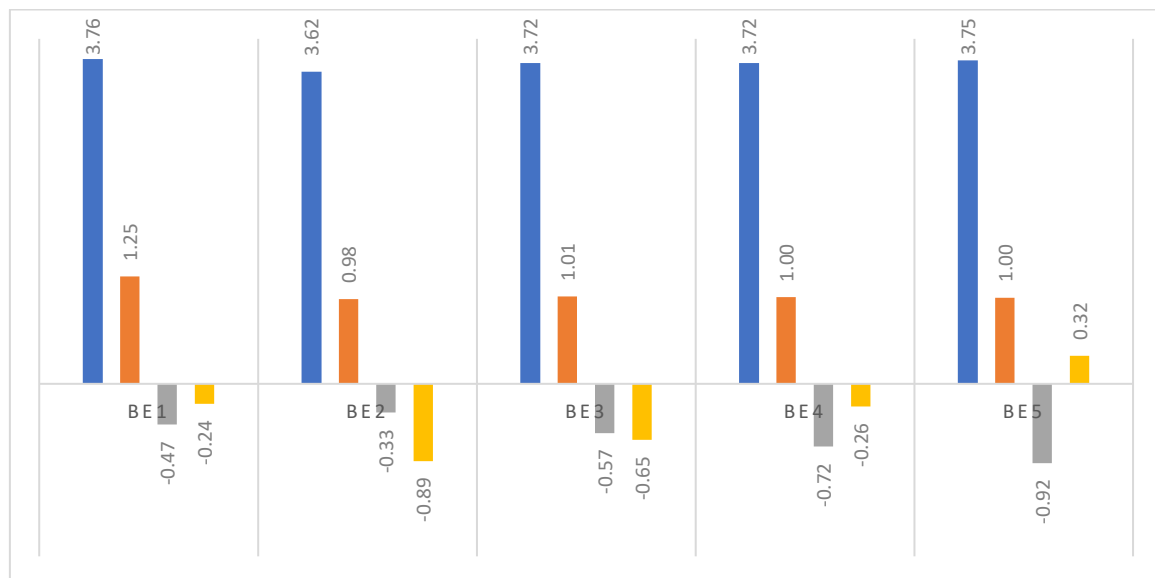
Brand equity measures show that respondents have an overall positive impression of Starbucks (mean = 3.75). Willingness to pay a premium (mean = 3.62) and preference over competitors with similar features (mean = 3.76) are slightly lower, indicating some price sensitivity, as shown in Graph 13. Variability is moderate, with standard deviations ranging from 0.98 to 1.25. Negative skewness reflects favorable views, particularly for Starbucks' perceived value and quality justification.

Table 13 - Brand Equity

Brand Equity					
Item	Description	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
BE1	Preference even with similar features	3.76	1.25	-0.47	-0.24
BE2	Willingness to pay premium price	3.62	0.98	-0.33	-0.89
BE3	Quality justifies price	3.72	1.01	-0.57	-0.65
BE4	Better value than other shops	3.72	1.00	-0.72	-0.26
BE5	Positive overall impression	3.75	1.00	-0.92	0.32

Source - Based on own results

Graph 13 - Brand Equity



Source: Based on own results

4.4 Reliability Analysis

The study used Cronbach's Alpha to assess the reliability of constructs. The results showed that all constructs demonstrated acceptable to good reliability, with values above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, as shown in Table 14.

The CSR activities showed good internal consistency, with responses across environmental protection, ethical sourcing, community development, fair employment, and social causes. Brand awareness showed good reliability, with items assessing Starbucks' CSR initiatives, fair practices, and social causes capturing the construct. Brand association showed moderate consistency, reflecting well-defined but potentially diverse aspects.

Customer loyalty was well-represented, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.769, indicating effective representation across preferences, recommendation, emotional attachment, repeat visits, and loyalty programs. Brand equity demonstrated the highest reliability, with items related to preference, premium pricing, quality, value, and overall impression aligning, indicating a robust and cohesive measurement of brand equity.

Table 14 - Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Items
CSR Activities	0.783	5
Brand Awareness	0.802	5
Brand Association	0.721	5
Customer Loyalty	0.769	5
Brand Equity	0.831	5

Source - Based on own results

4.5 Hypothesis Analysis

H1: There is no significant impact of customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities on brand awareness.

Table 15 - Regression Analysis - CSR Activities & Brand Awareness

Measure	Values
Correlation (r)	0.001
Covariance	0.001
R ²	0.000
Standard Error	1.189
Slope (β_1)	0.002
Intercept (β_0)	3.693
Predicted Values	3.700
Residuals	1.300
t-statistic	0.216
p-value (t-statistic)	0.829
F-statistic	0.098
p-value (F-statistic)	0.754

Source - Based on own results

The analysis examines whether customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities significantly impact brand awareness. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.001$) indicates a negligible relationship between the two variables, as shown in Table 15. Similarly, the covariance value (0.001) is minimal, reflecting almost no shared variability. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.000$) further confirms that CSR perceptions explain virtually none of the variance in brand awareness.

Regression analysis results also highlight the lack of a meaningful impact. The slope ($\beta_1 = 0.002$) is close to zero, suggesting that changes in CSR perceptions have no measurable influence on brand awareness. The intercept ($\beta_0 = 3.693$) represents the baseline brand awareness score, and predicted values hover around 3.700, closely aligning with observed data.

The standard error of 1.189 and residuals averaging 1.300 indicate variability in brand awareness scores that is unrelated to CSR perceptions. The statistical significance tests yield non-significant results, with both the t-statistic (0.216, $p = 0.829$) and F-statistic (0.098, $p = 0.754$) exceeding the typical 0.05 threshold.

The data fails to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities have no statistically significant impact on brand awareness within this study's sample.

H2: There is no significant impact of customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities on brand association.

Table 16 - Regression Analysis - CSR Activities & Brand Association

Measure	Values
Correlation (r)	0.155
Covariance	0.167
R ²	0.024
Standard Error	1.170
Slope (β_1)	0.202
Intercept (β_0)	2.863
Predicted Values	3.672
Residuals	0.328
t-statistic	0.216
p-value (t-statistic)	0.829
F-statistic	15.404
p-value (F-statistic)	0.000

Source - Based on own results

The analysis investigates whether customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities significantly impact brand association. The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.155$) indicates a weak positive relationship between the two variables, as shown in Table 16. The covariance (0.167) suggests limited shared variability, and the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.024$) shows that only 2.4% of the variation in brand association is explained by CSR perceptions.

Regression analysis reveals a small but statistically significant effect. The slope ($\beta_1 = 0.202$) suggests that for every unit increase in CSR perception, brand association is predicted to increase by 0.202 units. The intercept ($\beta_0 = 2.863$) represents the baseline level of brand association when CSR perceptions are minimal. The predicted values average 3.672, reflecting slight alignment with observed scores, while residuals average 0.328, indicating moderate variability in brand association not explained by CSR perceptions.

Statistical tests confirm the significance of this relationship. The F-statistic (15.404, $p = 0.000$) is highly significant, rejecting the null hypothesis at the 0.05 level. Although the t-statistic (0.216, $p = 0.829$) for the slope might indicate some local inconsistencies, the overall model suggests that CSR perceptions have a small but meaningful impact on brand association. The null hypothesis is rejected, and customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities are found to have a statistically significant, albeit weak, impact on brand association.

H3: There is no significant impact of brand awareness on customer loyalty towards Starbucks India.

Table 17 - Regression Analysis - Brand Awareness & Customer Loyalty

Measure	Values
Correlation (r)	0.231
Covariance	0.332
R ²	0.053
Standard Error	1.181
Slope (β_1)	0.236
Intercept (β_0)	2.759
Predicted Values	3.938
Residuals	0.062
t-statistic	2.945
p-value (t-statistic)	0.004
F-statistic	18.638
p-value (F-statistic)	0.000

Source - Based on own results

The hypothesis tested (H3) suggests that there is no significant impact of brand awareness on customer loyalty, as shown in Table 17. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.231 suggests a weak but positive relationship between brand awareness and customer loyalty.

This implies that as brand awareness increases, customer loyalty tends to improve slightly, though the relationship is not strongly pronounced. The covariance value of 0.332 further supports the presence of a positive association, indicating that variations in brand awareness are modestly aligned with variations in customer loyalty.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.053$) indicates that only 5.3% of the variation in customer loyalty can be explained by brand awareness. While this is a relatively small proportion, it still reflects a measurable influence of brand awareness on loyalty.

In terms of the regression analysis, the slope ($\beta_1 = 0.236$) signifies that for every unit increase in brand awareness, customer loyalty is expected to rise by 0.236 units, holding other factors constant. The intercept ($\beta_0 = 2.759$) denotes the baseline level of customer loyalty when brand awareness is zero. The predicted value of 3.938 aligns closely with the actual data, indicating the model's reasonable predictive capability.

The statistical significance of these findings is underscored by the t-statistic (2.945) and its associated p-value (0.004), which fall well below the conventional threshold of 0.05. This suggests that the relationship between brand awareness and customer loyalty is statistically significant, rejecting the null hypothesis of no impact. Similarly, the F-statistic (18.638) with its p-value (0.000) confirms the model's overall significance.

Despite these findings, the standard error of 1.181 and residuals of 0.062 suggest some variability in the data, indicating that factors other than brand awareness also play a role in shaping customer loyalty.

The influence of brand awareness on customer loyalty is statistically significant, however the effect size is modest, and other variables may contribute substantially to customer loyalty toward Starbucks India. This highlights the need for a broader examination of factors that enhance loyalty, alongside brand awareness initiatives.

H4: There is no significant impact of brand association on customer loyalty towards Starbucks India.

Table 18 - Regression Analysis - Brand Association & Customer Loyalty

Measure	Values
Correlation (r)	-0.025
Covariance	-0.035
R ²	0.001
Standard Error	1.213
Slope (β_1)	-0.025
Intercept (β_0)	3.725
Predicted Values	3.624
Residuals	0.376
t-statistic	2.820
p-value (t-statistic)	0.005
F-statistic	-1.488
p-value (F-statistic)	0.000

Source - Based on own results

The analysis of the hypothesis (H4) evaluates the impact of brand association on customer loyalty towards Starbucks India, with the null hypothesis asserting no significant relationship between these variables, as shown in Table 18.

The correlation coefficient ($r = -0.025$) indicates an extremely weak and negative association between brand association and customer loyalty, suggesting that higher brand association has a negligible and slightly inverse effect on loyalty. The covariance (-0.035) aligns with this finding, reflecting minimal variation between the two variables in a negative direction.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.001$) reveals that only 0.1% of the variation in customer loyalty can be explained by brand association. This underscores the very limited explanatory power of brand association as a predictor of customer loyalty in this context.

The regression analysis further supports these findings, with a slope ($\beta_1 = -0.025$) indicating that for every unit increase in brand association, customer loyalty is expected to decrease slightly by 0.025 units, holding other factors constant.

The intercept ($\beta_0 = 3.725$) represents the baseline level of customer loyalty when brand association is zero. The predicted values (3.624) and residuals (0.376) suggest some divergence between the model's predictions and the observed data.

Despite the weak relationship, the t-statistic (2.820) and its associated p-value (0.005) demonstrate statistical significance, indicating that the null hypothesis of no impact can be rejected. Similarly, the F-statistic (-1.488) with a p-value of 0.000 confirms the model's overall significance, although the negative F-statistic warrants careful interpretation due to potential anomalies in the data.

The standard error (1.213) highlights variability in the dataset, implying that other unexamined factors may play a significant role in influencing customer loyalty beyond brand association. The relationship between brand association and customer loyalty is statistically significant, the effect is both negligible and negative. This suggests that brand association has a limited and potentially counterintuitive impact on loyalty toward Starbucks India.

H5: There is no significant impact of customer loyalty on brand equity towards Starbucks India.

Table 19 - Regression Analysis - Customer Loyalty & Brand Equity

Measure	Values
Correlation (r)	0.030
Covariance	0.045
R ²	0.001
Standard Error	1.248
Slope (β_1)	0.031
Intercept (β_0)	3.652
Predicted Values	3.775
Residuals	0.225
t-statistic	2.332
p-value (t-statistic)	0.021
F-statistic	1.831
p-value (F-statistic)	0.177

Source - Based on own results

The hypothesis (H5) examines the impact of customer loyalty on brand equity for Starbucks India, with the null hypothesis suggesting no significant relationship between these variables, as shown in Table 19.

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.030$) indicates an extremely weak positive association between customer loyalty and brand equity. This suggests that customer loyalty has an almost negligible influence on brand equity in this context. The covariance value (0.045) aligns with this finding, reflecting minimal joint variation between the two variables.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.001$) further supports the weak relationship, showing that only 0.1% of the variation in brand equity can be explained by customer loyalty. This highlights the limited explanatory power of customer loyalty as a predictor of brand equity.

The regression analysis indicates a slope ($\beta_1 = 0.031$), meaning that for every unit increase in customer loyalty, brand equity is expected to increase by a mere 0.031 units, holding other factors constant. The intercept ($\beta_0 = 3.652$) reflects the baseline level of brand equity when customer loyalty is zero. The predicted value (3.775) and residuals (0.225) suggest moderate alignment between the model's predictions and observed data, though variability remains.

The t-statistic (2.332) and its corresponding p-value (0.021) indicate that the relationship between customer loyalty and brand equity is statistically significant at the 5% level, allowing for the rejection of the null hypothesis. However, the F-statistic (1.831) and its higher p-value (0.177) suggest that the overall regression model does not provide a robust explanation of the variation in brand equity based on customer loyalty alone.

The standard error (1.248) indicates variability within the dataset, pointing to the influence of other factors on brand equity beyond customer loyalty.

The relationship between customer loyalty and brand equity is statistically significant at the individual coefficient level, still the overall impact is negligible. This implies that customer loyalty contributes minimally to brand equity for Starbucks India, necessitating a broader analysis of other potential drivers of brand equity.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Key Findings

The study of how customer perceptions of Starbucks India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities affect brand equity through brand awareness, brand association, and customer loyalty presented several unique findings. The analysis of the data reveals several key findings that highlight the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), brand attributes, and customer perceptions of Starbucks India.

The majority of respondents belong to the age group of 25-34 years, with males representing a significantly larger proportion of the customer base. Occupation-wise, most respondents are employed in the private sector or self-employed, and a substantial percentage belong to middle-to-upper income brackets, aligning with Starbucks' positioning as a premium brand.

When it comes to Starbucks' visiting frequency, most respondents visit 2-3 times a month, with a smaller, but still notable, proportion visiting weekly. This indicates that while Starbucks enjoys occasional patronage, its core customer base consists of regular, albeit not daily, visitors.

The primary motivations for visiting Starbucks are brand reputation and social/business meetings, while factors like beverage quality and store ambiance play a secondary role. Similarly, the spending pattern suggests that most customers are comfortable spending between ₹500-₹1000 per visit, reflecting the brand's premium pricing strategy.

In terms of CSR activities, Starbucks is perceived positively, with respondents particularly appreciating the company's environmental protection efforts and ethical sourcing practices. The company's local community development initiatives also receive favorable feedback, with slightly lower but still strong recognition for its support of social causes. The findings suggest that Starbucks' CSR efforts resonate well with customers, aligning with their values around sustainability and social responsibility.

Brand awareness scores indicate strong recognition of Starbucks' commitment to community development, with environmental protection and ethical sourcing also highly valued. These elements contribute to the positive brand associations respondents have with the company.

Starbucks is seen as a brand that offers high-quality products and a sophisticated, premium lifestyle, with its welcoming atmosphere and innovative spirit further strengthening customer perceptions. Notably, social responsibility and ethical practices are integral to the brand's identity, with respondents associating these values with the company.

Customer loyalty results show that Starbucks enjoys high levels of loyalty, with many customers willing to recommend the brand to friends and family. The intention to continue visiting is also high, supported by strong emotional attachment and a positive impression of the brand.

The brand equity analysis reveals that Starbucks is perceived as offering good value for money, with customers willing to pay a premium for its products. While the brand is seen as offering better value compared to competitors, the willingness to pay higher prices is somewhat lower, suggesting that while customers appreciate Starbucks' quality and overall brand image, price sensitivity remains an important consideration for some.

The first research question, which investigated the impact of CSR activities on brand awareness, yielded particularly striking results. The statistical analysis found no significant link between customer perceptions of Starbucks India's CSR activities and brand awareness.

With a baseline brand awareness score of 3.693 and a slope nearly approaching zero, the findings clearly indicate that CSR activities do not significantly contribute to customer brand recognition. This unexpected result suggests that Starbucks India's brand awareness is most likely influenced by factors other than corporate social responsibility initiatives, such as product quality, marketing strategies, or overall brand positioning.

The second research question focused on brand associations and revealed a more subtle dynamic. The study found a weak but statistically significant positive correlation between CSR perceptions and brand association. The analysis found that CSR perceptions could only explain 2.4% of brand association variation.

For every unit increase in CSR perception, brand association increased by 0.202 units, with predicted values averaging 3.672. This finding suggests that, while Starbucks India's CSR activities do not significantly alter customer perceptions, they do add a small but meaningful layer to how customers conceptualize and interact with the brand.

Exploring the relationship between brand awareness, brand association, and customer loyalty revealed a complex story. Brand awareness had a weak positive correlation with customer loyalty, with a Pearson coefficient of 0.231 explaining 5.3% of the variation. Customer loyalty was predicted to increase by 0.236 units for every unit of increased brand awareness.

In contrast, brand association had a surprising weak negative correlation with customer loyalty, accounting for only 0.1% of variation and implying a slight decrease in loyalty as brand association increased. These counterintuitive findings highlight the multifaceted nature of customer loyalty, indicating that many factors other than these variables have a significant impact on customer commitment.

The final research question, which investigated the impact of customer loyalty on brand equity, revealed an intriguing pattern. The study discovered a statistically significant but very weak relationship between these variables.

Customer loyalty accounted for only 0.1% of brand equity variation, with each unit increase in loyalty resulting in a minimal 0.031-unit increase in brand equity. While statistically significant at the individual coefficient level, the overall effect was negligible, indicating that brand equity is determined by a far more complex interplay of factors than customer loyalty alone.

The findings show that CSR activities have a nuanced rather than direct impact on brand-related metrics. The findings call into question common assumptions about the linear relationship between corporate social responsibility and brand perception. Instead, they emphasize the importance of a holistic approach that considers multiple brand touchpoints and recognizes the complex mechanisms that underpin customer loyalty and brand equity.

These findings indicate that Starbucks India should reevaluate its strategic approach. It is misguided to rely solely on CSR communications to increase brand awareness or loyalty. The company should develop a more comprehensive strategy that incorporates CSR as part of a larger brand-building strategy. This could entail improving product quality, refining marketing narratives, and developing more sophisticated engagement strategies that better align with customer expectations and emotional connections.

5.2 Recommendations

Starbucks India should adopt a multifaceted approach to leveraging its CSR initiatives that goes beyond traditional communication strategies. Given the nuanced relationship between CSR activities and brand metrics, the company should integrate its social responsibility efforts more deeply into its core brand narrative and operational strategy. This means moving away from viewing CSR as a standalone communication tool and instead embedding these initiatives as an intrinsic part of the brand's identity and customer experience.

The research highlights the importance of environmental protection and ethical sourcing as key drivers of positive brand perception. Starbucks India should significantly invest in amplifying and transparently communicating these initiatives. This could involve creating more detailed storytelling around their sustainability practices, providing customers with clear, measurable insights into their environmental and ethical commitments. By developing robust, verifiable narratives about their sourcing practices, community development efforts, and environmental initiatives, the company can create deeper emotional connections with consumers.

Recognizing the demographic profile of their primary customer base - predominantly young professionals in the 25-34 age group with middle-to-upper income levels - Starbucks India should develop targeted CSR programs that resonate with this segment's values and aspirations. This might include collaborations with local entrepreneurship programs, supporting skill development initiatives for young professionals, or creating platforms that showcase social innovation and sustainability efforts that align with the professional and ethical concerns of this demographic.

The findings suggest that while CSR activities do not directly drive brand awareness, they contribute to subtle yet meaningful brand associations. Therefore, Starbucks should focus on creating more immersive and interactive CSR experiences that allow customers to actively participate in and feel connected to their social responsibility efforts. This could involve co-creation workshops, community engagement programs, or digital platforms that allow customers to track and participate in the company's social and environmental initiatives.

Given the high customer loyalty and positive brand perception, Starbucks India should develop a more sophisticated loyalty program that explicitly integrates CSR elements. This could include reward mechanisms that allow customers to contribute to social causes, choose sustainable options, or participate in community development projects. By making CSR an integral part of the loyalty experience, the company can enhance customer engagement and reinforce its commitment to social responsibility.

The research also revealed price sensitivity among customers, suggesting that Starbucks needs to carefully balance its premium positioning with perceived value. The company should focus on demonstrating the tangible value of its CSR initiatives, showing how ethical sourcing, environmental protection, and community development translate into superior product quality, customer experience, and broader societal impact. This approach can help justify the premium pricing and strengthen the brand's value proposition.

Lastly, Starbucks India should invest in continuous research and consumer feedback mechanisms to understand the evolving expectations around CSR. The dynamic nature of social responsibility means that strategies must be adaptable and responsive to changing customer perceptions and societal needs. By maintaining an ongoing dialogue with customers and being transparent about their CSR journey, Starbucks can continue to build trust and strengthen its brand equity in the competitive Indian market.

6. Conclusion

The study aimed to evaluate the impact of Starbucks India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities on brand equity through a multifaceted analysis of brand awareness, brand associations, customer loyalty, and overall brand perception. The research revealed a complex and nuanced relationship between these variables that challenges simplistic linear assumptions about CSR's direct influence on brand metrics.

Regarding brand awareness, the most surprising finding was the absence of a statistically significant relationship between CSR activities and brand recognition. With a baseline brand awareness score of 3.693 and regression analysis indicating a near-zero slope, the results suggest that Starbucks India's brand awareness is likely driven by factors beyond CSR, such as product quality, marketing strategies, and brand positioning. This unexpected outcome underscores the need for a more holistic approach to brand development.

The analysis of brand associations unveiled a subtle yet meaningful connection. A weak but statistically significant positive relationship was observed, with CSR perceptions explaining 2.4% of brand association variation. For each unit increase in CSR perception, brand association incrementally increased by 0.202 units. This finding indicates that while CSR may not dramatically reshape customer perceptions, it does contribute a modest layer to how customers conceptualize and connect with the Starbucks brand.

Customer loyalty emerged as a particularly complex dimension of the research. Brand awareness showed a weak positive correlation with customer loyalty, explaining 5.3% of loyalty variation. Interestingly, brand association displayed a weak negative correlation, suggesting that the relationship between brand perception and loyalty is far from straightforward. This counterintuitive result highlights the multifaceted nature of customer commitment and the need to consider a broader range of influencing factors.

The impact on brand equity was equally nuanced. Customer loyalty explained a mere 0.1% of brand equity variation, with each unit increase in loyalty corresponding to a minimal 0.031-unit increase in brand equity. While statistically significant at the individual coefficient level, the overall impact was negligible, reinforcing the complexity of brand equity formation.

Strategic implications for Starbucks India are profound. The research demonstrates that CSR activities exert a nuanced rather than direct influence on brand-related metrics. The company should move beyond a linear approach to CSR and brand building, instead adopting a comprehensive strategy that integrates CSR as one component of a broader brand engagement approach. This might involve simultaneously enhancing product quality, refining marketing narratives, and developing more sophisticated engagement strategies that resonate with customer expectations and emotional connections.

The future research could explore additional variables influencing brand awareness and loyalty, potentially incorporating qualitative methodologies to uncover the intangible ways CSR activities impact brand perception. A more comprehensive analysis of brand equity drivers could provide richer, more contextually grounded insights into the complex dynamics of brand-customer relationships.

The Starbucks India's CSR activities do not emerge as a primary driver of brand equity, however they represent an important element of the brand's overall value proposition. The research illuminates the need for a sophisticated, multidimensional approach to understanding how corporate social responsibility intersects with brand perception, loyalty, and equity in the contemporary market landscape.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Google Survey Form

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in this academic research study examining customer perceptions of Starbucks India. This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic research purposes.

Demographic Information

1. Name

2. Mail ID

3. Age Group:

(A) 18-24 Years (B) 25-34 Years (C) 35-44 Years (D) 45-54 Years (E) Above 55 Years

4. Gender:

(A) Male (B) Female (C) Prefer not to say (D) Other

5. Occupation:

(A) Student (B) Employed (Private Sector) (C) Employed (Public Sector) (D) Self-employed
(E) Homemaker (F) Retired (G) Other

6. Monthly Income:

(a) Below ₹25,000 (B) ₹25,000 - ₹50,000 (C) ₹50,001 - ₹75,000 (D) ₹75,001 - ₹100,000 (E)
Above ₹100,000

7. What is your frequency of visiting to the Starbucks?

(A) Daily (B) 2-3 times the week (C) Once the week (D) 2-3 times the month (E) Once the
month or less

8. What is your primary reason for visiting Starbucks?

(A) Beverages Quality (B) Store Ambiance (C) Social & Business Meeting Place (D) Brand
Reputation (E) Location Convenience (F) Free Workspace (G) Other

9. How much do you typically spend per visit at Starbucks?

(A) Below ₹300 (B) ₹300 - ₹500 (C) ₹500 - ₹800 (D) ₹800 - ₹1000 (E) Above ₹1000

10. Which factors influence your choice of Starbucks over other coffee chains?

(A) Sustainable Business Practices (B) Premium Brand Image (C) Product Variety (D) Customer Service Quality (E) Loyalty Program Benefits (F) Store Cleanliness And Ambiance (G) Social Media Presence (H) Community Engagement Initiatives

Main Survey

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

11. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities

Starbucks India actively participates in environmental protection initiatives (e.g., waste reduction, recycling).

Starbucks India demonstrates commitment to ethical sourcing practices and fair trade.

Starbucks India contributes positively to local community development.

Starbucks India provides fair employment opportunities and working conditions.

Starbucks India actively supports social causes and charitable initiatives.

12. Brand Awareness

I can easily recognize the Starbucks logo and brand elements.

Starbucks is the first brand that comes to mind when I think of coffee shops.

I am aware of Starbucks' product offerings and services.

I can quickly recall Starbucks' distinctive features and characteristics.

I am familiar with Starbucks' brand image and reputation.

13. Brand Association

I associate Starbucks with high-quality coffee and beverages.

I believe Starbucks represents the premium and sophisticated lifestyle.

I associate Starbucks with the welcoming and comfortable atmosphere.

Starbucks represents innovation and creativity in its products and services.

I associate Starbucks with social responsibility and ethical business practices.

14. Customer Loyalty

I prefer Starbucks over other coffee shop brands.

I would recommend Starbucks to my friends and family.

I intend to continue visiting Starbucks in the future.

I feel emotionally attached to the Starbucks brand.

I participate in Starbucks' loyalty program and promotional activities.

15. Brand Equity

Even if other brands have the same features, I prefer to buy Starbucks.

I am willing to pay the premium price for Starbucks products.

The overall quality of Starbucks justifies its price.

Starbucks offers better value compared to other coffee shop brands.

I have the strong positive overall impression of the Starbucks brand.