

**PRL 315: Public
Relations Research**

Research Proposal

**Veteran's Building Starbucks:
Increasing Consumers**



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December 8, 2022

Starbucks Coffee
Veteran's Building
101 Waverly Ave.
Syracuse, NY 13210

Dear Syracuse University Food Services,

At the beginning of the year, Syracuse University opened a Starbucks in the Veteran's Building. With the loss of the Starbucks on Marshall Street, places such as Salt City Coffee and Dunkin in the Schine Student Center are overpopulated by students and faculty who are looking to buy a cup of coffee.

We researched why students are not utilizing Starbucks in the Veteran's Building as an alternative to current coffee shops on campus. We set up focus groups of Syracuse University students to understand their behavior regarding their coffee needs and preferences. The students in the focus groups were from a diverse population of people based on where they live, where they spend time on campus, as well as their coffee preferences such as Dunkin in the Schine Student Center, Salt City Coffee, and other coffee shops on campus, such as People's Place (located under Hendricks Chapel). We studied the awareness levels around campus and established ways to increase the number of people who go this Starbucks.

With this information, we created specific marketing strategies to bring awareness to the location. These methods will bring success to the new location.

Attached below is a detailed plan of completed research methods and strategies in order to gain attraction from Syracuse students to this Starbucks location. We aim to increase customer visitation to this specific Starbucks location by implementing strategies from information obtained in these focus groups.

Regards,

Allie D'Angelo, Natalie Bass, Camilyn Flores, Hannah Gates and Katie Goodstadt

Executive Summary

We researched the Starbucks in the Veteran's Building on campus because not enough students are utilizing it. Since the Marshall Street Starbucks was closed, arguably the most popular coffee location on campus, people have been traveling out of the way to the West Campus Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts in the Schine Student Center or Salt City Coffee Shop. So many people crowd these locations now, and the lines are always out the door. The Starbucks in the Veteran's Building is not a whole store, but they have all of the typical coffee and tea drinks; they just do not have any Starbucks-branded food.

Our goal was to increase awareness about the Veteran's Building Starbucks location so that the rest of the coffee locations will become less crowded. We conducted our research by creating three focus groups of 8-10 Syracuse University students.

From these focus groups, we determined the reasons for students' coffee location preferences. We additionally learned why the Starbucks located in the Veteran's Building is not as popular as other locations, as well as suggested improvements to make the location more appealing for students to purchase their coffee at.

Literature Review

Coffee shop customers consider many factors when choosing where to get their coffee. In quantitative research from a questionnaire-based survey at various coffee shops, infrequent customers were more likely to revisit the shop if they had a positive experience. The infrequent customers were not as persuaded by product quality compared to experience quality (Ting and Thurasamy). In addition, people are persuaded by branded coffee shops and are motivated to visit coffee shops based on where their friends go and the convenience of where the shop is located (Burge).

The physical environment is an important factor when deciding to go to a coffee shop. The number of tables and chairs and bathroom accessibility affect whether or not a person will go to the shop. Physical appearance and surroundings highly influence a customer's experience and decision-making (Bitner). In addition, the location of a coffee shop influences whether or not a person will go. This is due to the location theory, that the distance the consumer lives affects whether or not they will come. The distance a place is from work, home and school affect the chance that a consumer will come. In order to urge consumers who are further away from the location, marketing and advertising is crucial to get their attention (Nelson).

College students rely on caffeine to function in college. In a survey from 2018, the results showed that 92% of students consumed caffeine in the past year. The study showed that 79% of students used caffeine to feel awake. For both females and males, coffee is the main source of caffeine intake. Students also use coffee to improve consumption and to maintain the social aspects of consuming coffee. Compared to the U.S. population, college students drink more coffee meaning that coffee is a very important part of their daily routine (Mahoney).

In terms of businesses, the 8Ps marketing mix is crucial. It is a combination of "McCarthy's (1960) [21] traditional 4Ps (product, price, promotion, place), Booms's and Bitner's (1981) [22] 7Ps (adding personnel, physical evidence, and process), to form an innovative marketing mix, . . . and personalization" (Adeleke). Personalization creates a unique positioning and marketing strategy that can really reel in potential customers, it's advantageous over competitors. The 8Ps also help explore and understand the marketing strategies that many coffee shop owners use to sustain their businesses.

One of the ways to attract customers is to build a relationship with them. The way a business connects with its customers is highly important because it is what creates customer loyalty. This can be done through community engagement and involvement (Adeleke). Such as coffee donations at local events. Another way to keep customers and have new potential customers is by being active on social media. The use of social media can help with marketing, promoting and branding. Exposure to social media will draw people's attention and have them come to the location.

The Starbucks in the Veteran's Building is not being utilized. We set up focus groups of Syracuse students to understand why they are not visiting the Starbucks location at the Veteran's Building. We wanted to establish why people are not going and create tactics to increase the knowledge of the Starbucks location.

We found out why the customer rate is low and established ways to increase the customer rate and sales profits. We obtained strategies on how to attract more customers. The data from the focus groups put into perspective the reasoning behind the low customer rate. There are not enough Syracuse students utilizing the Starbucks located in the Veteran's Building and we discovered why.

Methods

The purpose of this study was to determine how to increase consumer knowledge and engagement with the Starbucks located in the Veteran's Building.

In order to determine how to increase customers at the Starbucks located in the Veteran's Building on campus, the researched conducted consisted of three focus groups of 8-10 students to gauge interest and discussion about the location. For these focus groups, we uncovered facts that will influence opinions, behaviors and motivations and understand differences in perspectives. When developing the open-ended questions for our focus group, we included one opening, one introductory, one transition, two key and two ending questions. These questions provided clear and conversational answers. This research spanned two months, and consisted of the following questions:

Please state your name, year, and where you live on campus.

Describe how you spend your free time in between classes on campus

Where do you go to get coffee on campus?

What do you expect from your coffee experience?

What issues do you face when getting coffee that prevents that ideal experience?

So what you are saying is (sum up obtained information here). Is that correct?

Is there anything you want to say that you didn't get the chance or opportunity to include?

These questions helped determine the reason behind students' level of knowledge regarding the location, as well as how to increase sales within the branch. These questions additionally determined whether location, age or any other external factor may influence consumers to visit the location.

Over the span of one week, approximately three focus groups were conducted in order to obtain information regarding student knowledge and the rate of visitation of the Starbucks located in the Veteran's Building. Upon random selection, members of the focus group represented a variety of ages, locations of residence around campus and majors in order to promote diversity within the focus groups.

During the focus group, our team transcribed notes from each student, and a moderator asked each group the planned questions. In developing the questions to ask during the focus groups, it was vital to consider each student's whereabouts, such as where they spend the most time from campus, where they live, or where they are off campus. Buying and drinking coffee is a habitual experience where they have built a relationship with the company and the location.

With the data collected from the focus group, we analyzed this data through a comparative analysis in each focus group based on the answers of their behavior and feedback. Specifically, this allowed our research to gather in-depth insights where we can identify common themes such as patterns and ideas that come up repeatedly. However, it was equally important to identify differences within our sample and determine factors that might be a result of this. The focus group provided a deep understanding of Syracuse University students' actions and motivations.

This research specifically studied student knowledge regarding the Starbucks location. These are the primary public, as the majority of the individuals in the vicinity are of this audience. These individuals were selected based on age, major and location of residence around campus. This represented a variety of students that attend Syracuse University as well as the buildings they spend the most time in on campus.

Following the completed focus groups, all information gathered and recorded was analyzed to determine the key issues regarding the rate of visitation and knowledge regarding the Starbucks location. Some key information that was highlighted includes current problems students have with their preferred coffee location on campus and their opinions on how to create an ideal coffee-purchasing experience.

With this obtained information, this research can facilitate methods in which the Starbucks location can apply to their practices in order to increase student visitation and consumer satisfaction.

Budget

This research had a budget of \$0. All research conducted had no external payments needed in order to facilitate or fund the process.

Timetable

With the proposed research, there is a three-month timeline to obtain all information described below. The below table indicates the time allocated for specific stages of research including research design, data collection and data analysis.

Date	Stage	Activity	Additional Information
10/12/2022 - 10/19/2022	Research Design and Planning	Research problems are finalized, all questions are noted, a research design is developed and a finalized research proposal is prepared.	All information regarding the rate of monthly visitors from store opening through the end of September 2022 must be submitted by October 19th, 2022. All information regarding product sales since the store opening through the month of September 2022 must be submitted by October 19th, 2022. All customer demographics from the store opening to September 2022 must be submitted by October 19th, 2022.
10/20/2022 - 11/07/2022	Literature Review	All prior literature will be researched, prepared and applied to the anticipated study.	

Timetable

Date	Stage	Activity	Additional Information
11/08/2022-11/15/2022	Data Collection	All sampling plans will be finalized, and used in a focus group and survey to carry out and collect data. All data will be recorded and shared as it is obtained.	
11/16/2022- 11/27/2022	Data Analysis	All obtained information will be prepared for data analysis, then further analyzed to draw conclusions based on the given information.	
11/28/2022 - 12/07/2022	Writing Up	All obtained information will be written up into a final draft, reviewed with supervisors, surpassed the final editing stage and printed and placed in a complete binder with all research enclosed.	
12/08/2022	Research Conclusion	All information obtained through research will be presented with additional recommendations to increase the number of customers by 30% at the Starbucks located in the Veteran's Building on the Syracuse Campus.	

Findings

We conducted a study of three focus groups. Through these focus groups, we found information on the coffee experience around campus. The focus groups consisted of students who lived in various places across campus including on-campus dorms, off-campus apartment buildings within walking distance from campus and apartments driving distance from campus and people in all different grade levels.

When participants were asked how they spend their free time on campus, they expressed that they either stay near their class buildings to do work in between classes or go get food or coffee from a place near or on campus. The coffee shops students go to on campus are Salt City Coffee, the Starbucks on West Campus, Syracuse University Cafés and the Dunkin in the Schine Student Center. Students also go to Peaks Coffee and Recess Coffee when off campus. . Participants have various expectations from their coffee experience. Students expressed that expect their coffee order to be accurate, taste good, keep them awake and give them energy. When asked about issues they have faced when getting coffee, the participants of the surveys expressed that they have faced various issues when getting their coffee around campus. Students expressed long lines, wrong orders, rude service and not receiving their orders. Students expressed that in order to have an ideal experience when getting their coffee they want predictable coffee shops that provide them with caffeine and good customer service and short lines.

Students take time to do work in between their classes and get coffee to energize them. Students expect their coffee to keep them awake, be consistent and the experience to be quick and efficient. They have faced struggles with long lines, inconsistency in taste and rude service. Students are looking for a coffee shop that has good-tasting coffee, good service and short lines.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we conducted a research study on the Starbucks in the Veterans Building on campus and answered the question of whether or not students are utilizing this building. We conducted a study with three focus groups of SU students, and found many similarities and trends. The most popular places to get coffee among the participants of the focus groups are Starbucks (West Campus location), Salt City Coffee Shop and Dunkin (in the Schine Student Center). None of the participants mentioned the Veterans Building as a place they go frequently or at all. Another trend of the focus group members is when getting coffee, they are looking for caffeine and energy. They are looking for a coffee that tastes good, is convenient and will keep them awake. The most prevalent issue that focus group members face when getting coffee is long lines. A conclusion made from this research is that SU students are looking for quick, predictable and reliable coffee shops that give them energy. They like good customer service and dislike inefficiency and confusing menus.

Many participants were not aware that there was a Starbucks Coffee location in the Veterans Building, and when learning about this, many said they were eager to try it out. If the Veterans Building location is reliable and has good coffee, we would expect many of our participants to become loyal customers. However, if the coffee does not fit their needs, they will likely keep going to their usual coffee spot.

Recommendations

We recommend further research on marketing objectives to understand more about what strategies can attract customers. Social media is an important part of marketing, so this Starbucks location should learn more about which social media platforms will obtain the most traction and what will draw people to the location. Social media can be used to increase awareness of the Starbucks and for customers to explain their experience at the location.

We also recommend researching further on future students' experiences with getting coffee on campus. This can lead to finding more about the strengths and weaknesses of the coffee location and whether it caters to students' coffee needs.

Lastly, our focus groups expressed their concerns with the current coffee shops they go to and there are various solutions to specific problems. "Long lines" was a recurring answer when asked about problems; the Starbucks should raise their budget and hire more employees to lessen the stress or utilize efficiently a system that allows customers to order online and pick up in person. Another issue that many customers face is wrong orders. This can be avoided by having training for employees and more technology being used within the actual store. The Starbucks can also create an easy way to order through technology for customers which could encourage people to go to the location.

Appendices

Draft Measuring Instruments

In order to conduct the research, we utilized focus groups in order to obtain information. Below are the following questions asked during this process.

Please state your name, year, and where you live on campus.

Describe how you spend your free time in between classes on campus

Where do you go to get coffee on campus?

What do you expect from your coffee experience?

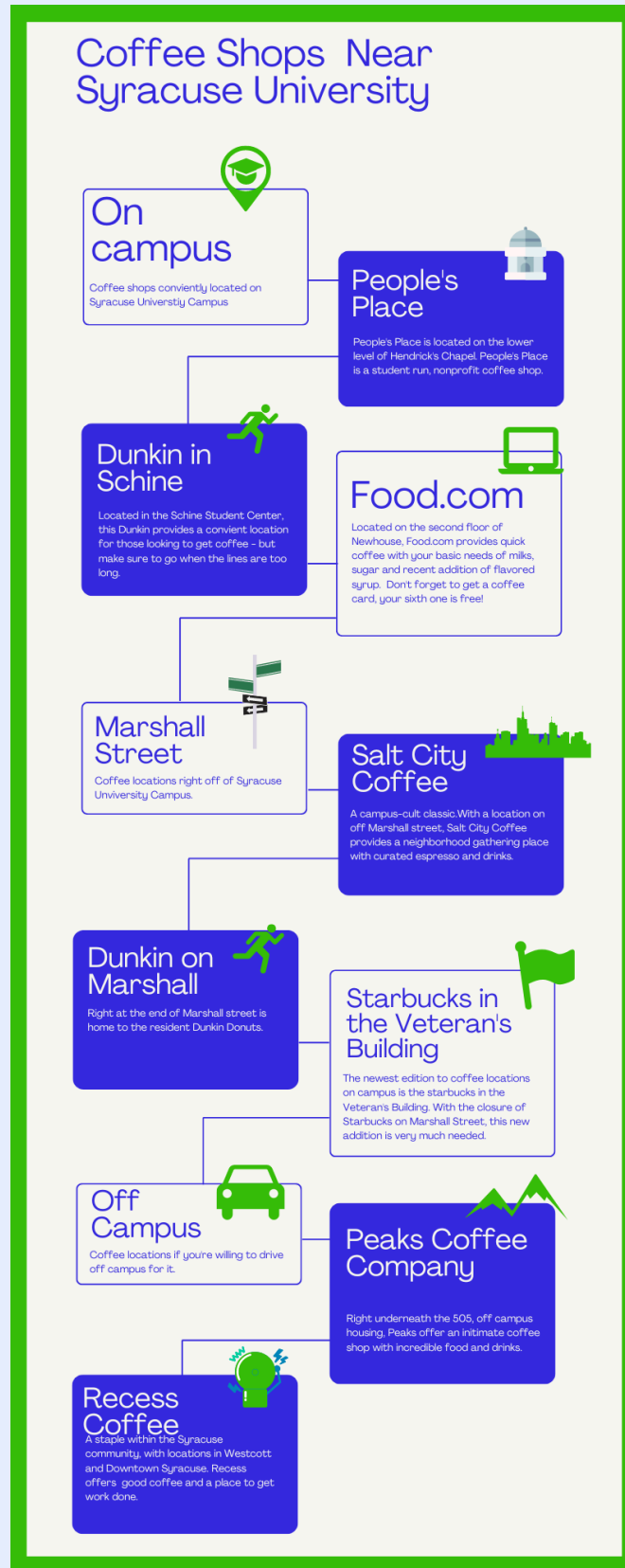
What issues do you face when getting coffee that prevents that ideal experience?

So what you are saying is (sum up obtained information here). Is that correct?

Is there anything you want to say that you didn't get the chance or opportunity to include?

Appendices

Infographic



Biographies of Researchers



Name: Allie D'Angelo
Hometown: Westport, CT
Zodiac sign: Libra
Major(s): Public Relations
Minor: Spanish

Allie D'Angelo is a junior at Syracuse University. She is dual enrolled in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and College of Arts & Sciences as a double major in public relations and English and textual studies, with a minor in Spanish. Outside of the classroom, her extracurriculars include being the Assistant Public Relations Director for University Union, a student-run programming board at Syracuse. After graduating, Allie anticipates entering the public relations field to work for an agency.



Name: Natalie Bass
Hometown: Westchester, NY
Zodiac sign: Virgo
Major(s): Public Relations
Minor: Sociology

Natalie Bass is a junior at Syracuse University. She is studying Public Relations in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. She is minoring in Sociology. She is originally from Chappaqua, New York. She has spent the last two summers interning in New York City in the Public Relations field. In her free time, she enjoys reading and cooking with her friends. After graduating, she anticipates working in the social media industry or at a PR agency.



Name: Hannah Gates
Hometown: Simi Valley, CA
Zodiac sign: Aquarius
Major(s): Psychology and Public Relations

Hannah Gates is a senior at Syracuse University. She is dual enrolled in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Relations and College of Arts & Sciences as a double major in public relations and psychology. Outside of the classroom, her extracurriculars include being the Social Media Director for University Union, the official and largest programming board of Syracuse University. When she is not creating content at events, you can find her reading a book, or watching her favorite show, New Girl. After graduating, Hannah hopes to continue her work in the social media and digital media space in the entertainment industry.

Biographies of Researchers



Name: Katie Goodstadt
Hometown: Westchester, NY
Zodiac sign: Capricorn
Major(s): Public Relations
Minor: Psychology

Katie Goodstadt is a junior at Syracuse University. She is studying PR with a minor in psychology. She is from Westchester, New York. Last summer, she did a PR internship with an international beauty and perfume company in New York City. She loves to bake, hang out with friends, go shopping and travel in her free time. She hopes to work for a large beauty corporation or magazine in the future.



Name: Camilyn Flores
Hometown: Queens
Zodiac sign: Pisces
Major(s): Public Relations
Minor: Theater

Camilyn Flores is a junior studying Public Relations at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, with a minor in Theater. She was born and raised in Queens, New York. Her interests include dancing, singing, and acting. She is part of the Latin dance troupe called "Raices" since the Spring 2022 semester. Camilyn hopes to become a public relations practitioner and gain experience with different companies but plans on owning her own PR and advertising agency one day.

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