THE KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS' CHOICES OF COFFEE IN THE CHINESE MARKET: A CASE STUDY OF LUCKY CUP

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AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS SIAM UNIVERSITY 2025

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This Independent Study Has Been Approved as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, with the rapid development of modern urban life and changes in people's lifestyles, coffee has gradually become a part of daily life in China, emerging as one of the major beverages after tea. As Chinese consumers' preference for coffee grew, their consumption habits underwent several stages of change. Despite the significant achievements of the emerging coffee brand Lucky Cup in a short period, there remained a considerable gap compared to well-known brands like Starbucks, which presented challenges in attracting consumers. Therefore, understanding consumers' coffee preferences was particularly important. This study aimed to achieve the following research objectives: 1) To investigate the impact of perceived quality on consumers' coffee choices; 2) To investigate the impact of brand culture on consumers' coffee choices; 3) To investigate the impact of sustainable management on consumers' coffee choices; and 4) To investigate the impact of social stimuli on consumers' coffee choices.

This study employed a quantitative method, collecting a total of 280 responses, of which 265 were valid questionnaires, yielding a response rate of 94.6%. The results indicated that perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, and social stimuli all had a significant positive impact on consumers' coffee choices.

In the future research on Lucky Cup, the focus should be on implementing refined quality control standards, fully exploring coffee culture to enrich the brand's essence, and creating more convenient in-store services.

Keywords: perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, social stimuli, consumers' coffee choices

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DECLARATION

I, Fang Yan, hereby certify that the work embodied in this independent study entitled "The Key Factors Influencing Consumers' Choices of Coffee in the Chinese Market: A Case Study of Lucky Cup" is result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

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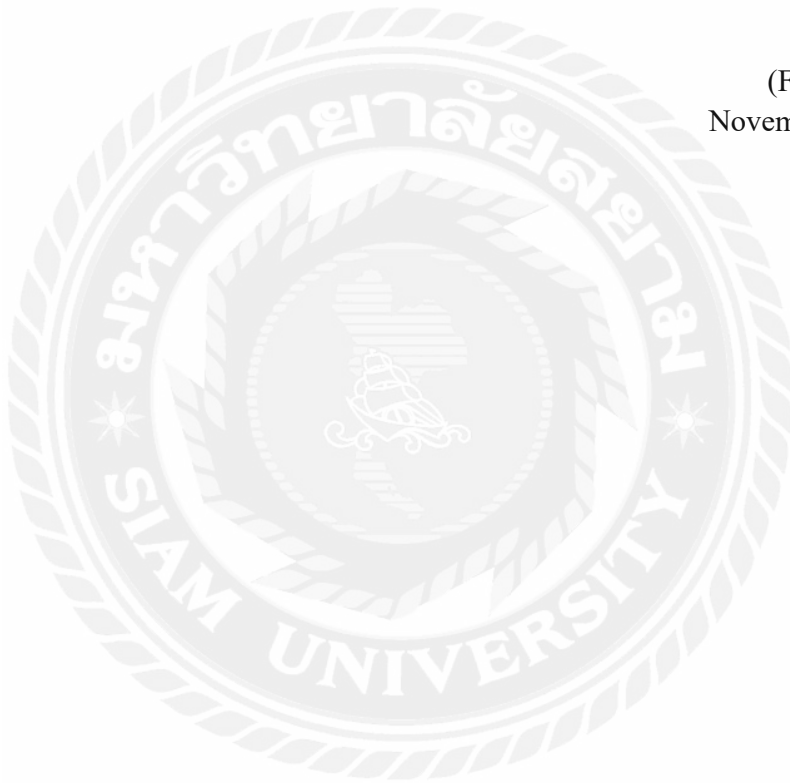
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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Coffee, along with cocoa and tea, is one of the world's three major non-alcoholic beverages. As the second-largest traded commodity globally, after oil, coffee has a daily co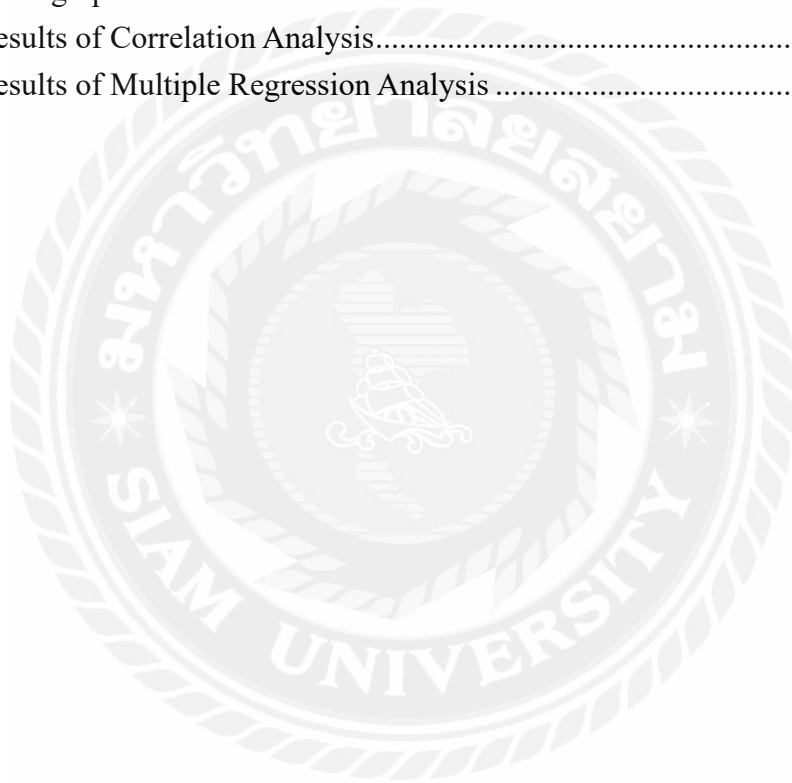nsumption of around 2 billion cups worldwide (Chen, 2012). In recent years, with the rapid development of modern urban life and changes in people's lifestyles, coffee has gradually become a part of daily life in China, emerging as one of the major beverages after tea. According to predictions from iiMedia Consulting, China's coffee industry is expected to maintain a growth rate of 27.2%, with the market size projected to reach 1 trillion RMB by 2025, thereby narrowing the gap with developed countries. In terms of coffee consumption, the "2023 China Urban Coffee Development Report" indicates that the per capita annual coffee consumption in China is only 10 cups, which is 100 times lower than in Finland, 70 times lower than in Switzerland, and nearly 50 times below the world average (Ding, 2021). However, with China's population being the largest in the world and its per capita GDP ranking 63rd globally, there is ample room for growth in coffee consumption.

As Chinese consumers' preference for coffee has grown, their consumption habits have also undergone several stages of change. Before 2017, many Chinese consumers had not developed a deep awareness of coffee purchasing and generally favored basic coffee types, such as milk-heavy cappuccinos and lattes. This trend encouraged numerous international coffee chains, such as Starbucks and Costa, to actively enter the Chinese market, focusing on introducing beverages that align with consumer taste preferences (Fan, 2010). They attracted customers by offering a wide range of milk-based coffee options on their menus, catering to the Chinese consumers' demand for smooth and sweet beverages. From 2017 to 2020, over the span of three years, the coffee trend continued to gain momentum. Emerging domestic brands like Luckin and Manner frequently created their own unique offerings, such as fresh coconut lattes, oat cappuccinos, and orange-infused sparkling coffee. These innovations not only diversified coffee products but also reflected the increasing health consciousness among consumers. The combination of new ingredients with coffee has been well received by consumers (Ma, 2012).

Founded in 2017, Lucky Cup has exceeded 6,000 stores by October 2023. In its first year of operation, the number of new stores opened by Lucky Cup was nearly three times that of Luckin's total new store openings in 2022, reaching more than half of

Luckin's overall store count. This achievement far surpasses that of other brands, such as Starbucks, Luckin Coffee, McCafé, Novus Coffee, and Manner in the same year, and even exceeds the total store counts of some of these brands (Shen, 2019). This rapid expansion demonstrates Lucky Cup's competitiveness and growth potential in the market, particularly among young consumers. However, despite Lucky Cup's significant achievements in a short period, its later market entry has resulted in a gap in store numbers compared to well-established brands like Starbucks and Luckin (Tan, 2018). Moreover, Lucky Cup's brand awareness is still far behind these two giants, which poses challenges in attracting consumers.

Various factors influence consumers when purchasing coffee. Therefore, Lucky Cup must place greater emphasis on understanding the factors that influence consumer choices. Only by comprehensively considering consumers' purchasing preferences can Lucky Cup find its position in a highly competitive market and achieve sustainable development."

1.2 Questions of the Study

China's coffee consumption market is experiencing rapid growth, with the rise of the young consumer demographic presenting unprecedented market opportunities for the industry. This trend has prompted numerous domestic and international coffee brands to enter the market, competing to develop innovative products, optimize store layouts, and enhance customer experiences in order to secure a foothold in this highly competitive environment (Wang, 2014). However, despite the enormous market potential, many coffee brands still face challenges such as insufficient customer loyalty and unstable store foot traffic (Xiao & Tu, 2019). These issues have hindered brand development, placing many brands at a disadvantage in the market competition. Therefore, understanding the key factors influencing consumers' coffee choices has become a pressing issue that needs to be addressed. Based on this, this study proposes the following research questions:

1) Does perceived quality positively impact consumers' coffee choices?
2) Does brand culture positively impact consumers' coffee choices?
3) Do sustainable management positively impact consumers' coffee choices?
4) Does social stimuli positively impact consumers' coffee choices?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In today's fiercely competitive market, Lucky Cup faces the significant challenge of standing out among numerous rival brands and achieving steady growth despite the dual competition from the well-established sibling brands, Luckin Coffee and Starbucks . This competitive landscape pushes Lucky Cup to explore effective market strategies to capture consumers' preference.

To achieve this, Lucky Cup needs to gain a deeper understanding of the key factors influencing consumers' coffee choices. This knowledge will not only help Lucky Cup establish a differentiated advantage in a highly competitive market but also lay a solid foundation for the brand's future sustainable development. This study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

1) To investigate the impact of perceived quality on consumers' coffee choices.
2) To investigate the impact of brand culture on consumers' coffee choices.
3) To investigate the impact of sustainable management on consumers' coffee choices.
4) To investigate the impact of social stimuli on consumers' coffee choices.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study adopted a quantitative research approach and extensively reviewed literature on consumer decision-making, perceived quality, brand culture, green management, and social stimuli. By summarizing the findings of previous scholars, a solid theoretical foundation was established for this research. Through the literature, key factors influencing consumers' coffee choices were identified.

Based on these various factors, a survey questionnaire was designed. The subjects of the study were consumers who have purchased Lucky Cup products. To collect relevant data, electronic questionnaires were distributed in six WeChat groups associated with Lucky Cup, facilitating data collection.

After the questionnaire data were gathered, SPSS software was utilized for verification analysis. The main data analysis methods employed included descriptive statistical analysis of the sample, reliability and validity analyses, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. Through these analyses, the researcher aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how various factors influence consumers' coffee choices and provide robust theoretical support for related marketing strategies.

1.5 Significance of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

From a theoretical perspective, this research provides significant empirical evidence for the application and expansion of existing theories, enriching the theoretical framework regarding consumer choice for domestic coffee brands. By exploring factors such as consumer preferences, brand culture, pricing, and service, the study reveals the critical elements that influence consumer decision-making, thereby facilitating Lucky Cup's success in the market. Additionally, this research offers valuable insights for other businesses, aiding in the exploration of more scientific and standardized strategic approaches to achieve sustainable development and enhance market competitiveness.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

From a practical perspective, Lucky Cup, as a brand of considerable scale and recognition, faces numerous opportunities and challenges in the current market environment. By conducting an in-depth analysis of the factors influencing consumers' coffee choices, business managers can more clearly identify the advantages and disadvantages that Lucky Cup encounters in competition. This analysis not only helps uncover the brand's development potential but also assists Lucky Cup in formulating reasonable and practical market competition strategies to adapt to the ever-changing consumer demands.

At the same time, this research helps Lucky Cup clarify the impact of various factors on consumer choices, allowing the company to develop and refine targeted service marketing strategies to enhance the effectiveness of its marketing efforts. On the other hand, Lucky Cup can extend its marketing efforts to address specific consumer demands and concerns based on what consumers care about, which will better align internal operational resources and provide improved services to customers.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Consumer purchase decision: It refers to the series of activities and steps that individuals go through in recognizing their needs, gathering information, evaluating alternatives, and ultimately making a purchase decision.

Perceived quality: It refers to consumers subjective judgment of the overall quality and experience during the process of selection and tasting. This includes assessments related to taste, aroma, origin, and production techniques.

Brand culture：It refers to the internal elements carried by a brand, such as values, beliefs, philosophies, and emotions, as well as the cultural meanings conveyed through external expressions like brand names, logos, advertisements, and packaging.

Sustainable management: Sustainable management refers to the practices in which enterprises fully consider environmental protection, social responsibility, and economic benefits in their operations. This involves adopting sustainable production methods, effective resource management, and green supply chain management to achieve a coordinated development of economic, environmental, and social benefits. Sustainable management not only focuses on the impact of products and services on the environment and society but also emphasizes the responsibility of enterprises for both throughout their entire production and operational processes.

Social stimuli: Social stimuli refer to the influences on consumers that arise from family, social class, surrounding environments, and relevant groups.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical foundation and literature review. It presents a detailed introduction to relevant theories by reviewing and organizing related research literature. This chapter covers definitions and current research status of key concepts, namely perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, and social stimuli. By examining prior studies, this section aims to explore the establishment of research hypotheses and the theoretical foundation of the study.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

2.2.1 Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action, proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), is a theoretical framework that explains how individual behavior is determined. The theory posits that an individual's actual behavior is directly determined by their behavioral intention. Behavioral intention refers to the thoughts or plans that individuals develop prior to deciding to perform a specific behavior (Fang, 2012). This intention is primarily influenced by two factors: attitude toward the behavior and subjective norms.

Attitude toward the behavior emphasizes the role of personal factors in an individual's decision-making process. This factor is shaped by one's emotional disposition and value estimation toward performing a particular behavior. When an individual perceives a behavior as beneficial, expecting positive outcomes, they are likely to hold favorable emotions and positive value judgments, increasing the likelihood of performing that behavior. Conversely, if the individual perceives the behavior as disadvantageous or anticipates negative outcomes, they are likely to hold negative emotional evaluations and value judgments, decreasing the likelihood of engaging in that behavior (Liu & Qiu, 2019).

Subjective norm highlights the influence of social or external factors on an individual's behavior decisions. This factor refers to the social norms and expectations of important others, such as family, friends, or significant others, that affect the individual's behavior (Zhang et al., 2020). For example, whether these influential people expect or encourage the individual to perform a particular behavior may align or conflict with the individual's own intentions. This perceived social pressure is

considered an important influence on the individual's decision-making process when determining whether to perform a specific behavior.

However, the TRA includes an implicit assumption of "volitional control," suggesting that individuals have complete control over their behavior without requiring additional technical means, opportunities, or cooperation with others (Zhang, 2018). In reality, however, most behavioral decisions and their execution are neither entirely voluntary nor completely influenced by others; rather, they exist in an intermediate state between these extremes. Therefore, considering these real-world complexities, the TRA appears overly simplistic and insufficient for fully explaining individual behavioral decisions. This limitation led to the development of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

2.2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) expands upon the influence of attitudes toward behavior and subjective norms on behavioral intention by introducing an additional factor: perceived behavioral control (Wu & Jin, 2017). This factor further considers its impact on an individual's intention to act. Perceived behavioral control primarily reflects an individual's perception of the constraints and ease of performing a particular behavior. For example, factors such as the resources available to the individual, which may either limit or facilitate the behavior, the cost of engaging in the behavior, the availability and accessibility of necessary elements for action, past experiences, and anticipated obstacles all influence an individual's behavioral intention (Qi & Zhang, 2014).

The newly introduced perceived behavioral control factor affects actual behavioral decisions in three main ways (Yang, & Jin, 2018). First, it influences attitudes toward the behavior, which then modifies behavioral intention, ultimately affecting the individual's actual decision-making. Second, it directly impacts behavioral intention, which then influences actual behavior, thus indirectly affecting the final decision. Third, perceived behavioral control can directly influence actual behavioral decisions, thereby helping to predict an individual's actual behavior.

In recent years, the TPB has been more widely used by scholars to explain and predict individual behaviors, providing a basis for exploring feasible measures to improve personal actions. For example, Zhao (2022) utilized this theory to examine the key factors influencing consumers' intentions to purchase fresh agricultural products online, offering new insights to encourage consumers to buy fresh products through online platforms.

2.3 Consumer Purchase Decision

The consumer purchase decision is both complex and nuanced. In this process, consumers carefully evaluate products or services they consider buying, making selections based on their assessments to fulfill their needs. This process can be understood from both broad and narrow perspectives.

From a broad perspective, the consumer purchase decision is not merely a simple act of buying. Instead, it encompasses a comprehensive process in which consumers seek to satisfy their needs by developing a purchasing motivation, analyzing, evaluating, and selecting from multiple options to determine the optimal choice (Zhang & Sun, 2018). Following the purchase, consumers then assess the received product or service and decide whether they would repurchase it. These stages are interconnected, forming a closed loop. Within this cycle, consumers continuously adjust and refine their purchasing choices in response to internal factors such as perception, learning, memory, and emotions, as well as external influences like culture, social environment, and marketing activities (Biswas et al., 2017).

From a narrow perspective, consumer purchase decision is often analyzed from a marketing management standpoint, focusing on understanding how consumers form needs, search for information, evaluate options, and ultimately make a purchase decision. In this process, consumers actively or passively receive information from various sources, including personal experiences, advertisements, and recommendations from friends and family, using these inputs to make rational purchase decisions (Cai et al., 2019).

Specifically, once consumers recognize a need, they begin actively searching for relevant information. This information may come from personal experiences, recommendations from friends and family, commercial advertising, or mass media (Wang et al., 2018). After gathering sufficient information, consumers evaluate and compare different purchase options, considering factors such as price, quality, and reputation. Finally, based on their needs and preferences, they select the most suitable option and proceed with the purchase.

After purchase, consumers typically evaluate the product or service based on a comparison between expected and actual performance. If the product meets or exceeds expectations, they feel satisfied and may consider repeat purchases. Conversely, if the

product performs poorly or falls short of expectations, they may feel disappointed and explore alternative options (Du et al., 2019).

Therefore, this study defines consumer purchase decision-making as the series of activities and steps that individuals go through in recognizing their needs, gathering information, evaluating alternatives, and ultimately making a purchase decision.

Exploring the consumer purchase decision is crucial for accurately understanding consumer needs and optimizing marketing strategies for businesses. Although coffee consumption culture in China is relatively new, relevant literature on historical coffee consumption habits can be further organized and analyzed to identify related influencing factors.

For instance, Fang (2012) examined consumer purchasing behavior in coffee shops, using Luckin Coffee as a case study. The research findings indicated that factors such as the freshness of perceived quality, takeout and delivery services, pricing, product uniqueness, and brand image significantly influence consumers' intentions to purchase coffee. Kim (2011) argued that concerns about environmental pollution and increasing health awareness have led to a rise in the willingness to purchase eco-friendly packaged coffee, particularly among individuals aged 30 to 40 in first-tier cities, who show an active trend in green coffee consumption. Qi and Zhang (2014) studied the impact of social stimuli on consumers' choices regarding coffee and found that emphasizing social sharing increases the likelihood of consumers purchasing coffee products. In this context, social stimuli can amplify purchasing intentions.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of four factors on consumers' coffee choices: perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, and social stimuli.

2.4 Factors of Consumers' Coffee Choices

2.4.1 Perceived Quality

In recent years, perceived quality has garnered significant attention from practitioners, managers, and scholars across various fields. Many researchers have defined perceived quality from different perspectives.

The perceived quality of a product encompasses both subjective evaluations by consumers and objective facts. When consumers believe a product is good, their

subjective perceived quality is high (Wang et al., 2019). Conversely, the higher the actual overall quality of the product, the higher its objective perceived quality. When choosing a product, consumers often make a comprehensive assessment of perceived quality based on both subjective and objective criteria. For example, when purchasing sneakers, customers not only consider the objectively existing quality of the materials but also evaluate how well the sneakers fit through sensory perception, forming a subjective judgment of perceived quality. According to Steenkamp (1990), consumers' perceived quality of a product was neither entirely objective nor entirely subjective. It was an overall evaluation based on subconscious judgments of quality-related factors influenced by personal and environmental factors. Holbrook et al. (2010) believed that perceived quality was relative and influenced by consumers' personal shopping experiences. It was a subjective assessment made by consumers regarding the quality of a product. Differences in individual shopping experiences and personality traits could lead to variations in perceived quality evaluations, even for the same product.

Chapman et al. (1999) defined perceived quality as the subjective judgment consumers made regarding the overall excellence of a purchased product or a service 'they received. Researchers had varied understandings of perceived quality based on different perspectives. Some analyzed it from a psychological standpoint, others incorporated marketing theories, and some scholars explored the formation and influencing factors of perceived quality from a behavioral economics angle. However, despite the diverse research approaches, all scholars agreed that perceived quality was subjective (Tian & Xiao, 2016). It was a comprehensive evaluation made by consumers based on their personal experiences, needs, and psychological perceptions. This study, by systematically reviewing the existing literature on perceived quality definitions and considering the characteristics of coffee as a specific product, defined the perceived quality of coffee as consumers subjective judgment of the overall quality and experience during the process of selection and tasting. This included assessments related to taste, aroma, origin, and production techniques.

Wang (2014) noted that consumers with different lifestyles exhibit significant differences in their perceptions of coffee products and their acceptance of innovations. Consumers from various lifestyles possess differing levels of subjective knowledge about coffee. Furthermore, women are generally more accepting of innovative coffee products than men. Additionally, consumers who enjoy cooking or are more concerned about food tend to have a higher level of acceptance for innovative coffee products. In the consumption decision-making process, consumers pay particular attention to the quality of coffee, the freshness of the coffee beans, and the taste and flavor of the coffee. Regarding dietary characteristics, they are also concerned about the caffeine content of

coffee beverages and whether they contain additives such as sugar, creamers, or trans fats (Li et al., 2022).

2.4.2 Brand Culture

The explicit elements of brand culture are tangible external expressions of the brand that focus on the sensory aspects experienced by consumers. A prominent figure in this field is Keller (1991), who pointed out that the fundamental function of brand culture is to distinguish ownership, which includes external elements such as names, imagery, slogans, and packaging. On the other hand, the implicit elements of brand culture represent the brand's intrinsic attributes, such as cultural connotations and symbolic meanings. Chernatony (2011) revealed, through the construction of the brand pyramid model, that the components of a brand include characteristics, benefits, emotional returns, values, and personality traits, which progress in layers and reflect the deeper essence of brand culture. Kotler and Keller (2012) examined actual cases and identified six main aspects of brand culture from a holistic perspective: brand characteristics, brand benefits, brand personality, brand audience, brand values, and brand culture. Tian (2011), focusing on Chinese liquor brands, argued that the elements of a brand consist of the foundation of the enterprise, the foundation of the product, product quality, brand culture, corporate culture, and brand symbols. Li (2021) stated that brand culture generally comprises five fundamental elements: brand name, brand identity, brand philosophy, brand connotation, and brand goals.

In this study, brand culture refers to the internal elements carried by a brand, such as values, beliefs, philosophies, and emotions, as well as the cultural meanings conveyed through external expressions like brand names, logos, advertisements, and packaging. Brand culture not only reflects the personality and characteristics of the brand but also influences consumers' purchasing decisions and loyalty. It serves as an important foundation for establishing emotional connections between the brand and its consumers (Zhou, 2019).

Fan (2010) conducted a historical analysis of coffee consumption culture in China and found that people's coffee consumption activities emphasize the quality of the coffee itself as well as the personalized lifestyle it represents. Coffee is connected to culturally significant concepts such as literature and art, and there is a trend towards sustainable development in this regard. In other words, purchasing coffee is not merely about acquiring the product itself; it also reflects a particular attitude and way of life. Additionally, different social groups, due to varying lifestyles and interpretations of consumption aesthetics, create diverse coffee consumption cultures. Park and Han

(2021) found that a company's ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) activities, along with a positive corporate image and culture, have a positive impact on the value of products and services, which in turn influences purchasing decisions. Zhu et al. (2019) empirically demonstrated that brand communication had a predictive effect on consumers' purchase intentions, based on the theory of social exchange. The degree of familiarity consumers had with a brand made them more sensitive to brand communication, which in turn made them more susceptible to its influence.

2.4.3 Sustainable Management

Sustainable management refers to the practices in which enterprises fully consider environmental protection, social responsibility, and economic benefits in their operations (Bandura, 1986). This involves adopting sustainable production methods, effective resource management, and green supply chain management to achieve a coordinated development of economic, environmental, and social benefits. Sustainable management not only focuses on the impact of products and services on the environment and society but also emphasizes the responsibility of enterprises for both throughout their entire production and operational processes. This approach aims to promote comprehensive sustainable development and meet consumers' expectations regarding social responsibility and environmental protection.

With the widespread adoption of ecological civilization concepts and guidance from national policies, the production behaviors and marketing strategies of enterprises have continuously changed. Consumers' eco-friendly consumption concepts have gradually formed, and environmental management has increasingly been integrated into the decision-making process of product purchases, playing a more significant role in consumers' buying behavior (Blue et al., 2001). Consumers are paying more attention to attributes related to environmental benefits that are included in products, such as the materials used in the raw materials, energy consumption during use, and the recyclability of the products. Consequently, these attributes are becoming increasingly important factors that directly influence consumers' purchase and willingness to pay. Specifically, the higher the environmental friendliness of a product, the greater its potential impact on environmental improvement during the stages of production, consumption, and recycling (Shen, 2016). This leads to a stronger purchase intention among consumers, who are also willing to pay a higher premium.

Theoretical research indicated that the promotion and widespread adoption of sustainable management could enhance consumers' understanding of sustainable management principles, increase their recognition of green and environmentally

friendly behaviors, and subsequently alter their ecological awareness, thereby encouraging them to choose sustainable products (Wang, 2010). As the concept of sustainable management developed, consumers' knowledge of sustainable consumption continued to grow, and their awareness of ecological consumption gradually strengthened. Ultimately, this led to a change in consumer purchasing behavior, making them more inclined to select environmentally friendly products aligned with sustainable management practices. The environmental activities of enterprises impact consumers' purchasing behavior, and sustainable management practices can enhance existing customers' intentions to revisit, increase their likelihood of making recommendations, and attract new customers (Wang, 1998). In a highly competitive market, these factors can serve as a source of competitive advantage.

2.4.4 Social Stimuli

Individual consumption behavior is often not isolated; rather, it is significantly influenced by the surrounding environment and the opinions of family and friends. In the context of sustained economic growth and evolving consumer concepts, the social environment acts like an invisible hand that subtly alters users' values and consumption tendencies, often unconsciously, thereby having a deeper impact on consumers' purchasing behavior (Wu, 2013).

Social stimuli refer to the influences on consumers that arise from family, social class, surrounding environments, and relevant groups. Consumers experience active cognitive awakening in response to external information stimuli. This cognitive awakening stimulates intrinsic motivation, while cognitive defense mechanisms automatically filter out irrelevant information. Under the influence of stimulating factors, consumers begin to actively or passively accept a series of information, leading to corresponding psychological activities (Wu & Wu, 2019). Driven by these psychological factors, they make purchasing decisions and engage in buying behavior.

Estbrook (2009) suggested that consumers' purchase intentions can be stimulated through various means, such as sellers conducting on-site promotions and recommending products to friends, which can encourage customers to buy more items. Social interactions within the surrounding environment significantly influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors. For example, recommendations or reviews from friends and colleagues can considerably enhance the appeal of a product, prompting consumers to develop purchase intentions. Relevant groups, such as social media circles, also affect consumers' purchasing decisions by sharing experiences and opinions.

2.5 Lucky Cup

Founded in 2017, "Lucky Coffee" is a chain brand focused primarily on freshly brewed coffee, fully operated by Mixue Ice Cream and Tea Co., Ltd. In 2017, Mixue Group officially initiated and began incubating the coffee project, establishing Henan Lucky Coffee Catering Management Co., Ltd. in September of the same year. The first Lucky Coffee store grandly opened in Zhengzhou's Langyue Park.

In 2018, the company launched directly operated stores for testing and research, developing product and store models. Over the years, Lucky Coffee has assembled an excellent team, achieving seamless integration with the management, research and development, procurement, logistics, and factory resources of the group company, laying a solid foundation for brand development.

Starting in 2020, the brand underwent an upgrade and opened franchises, forming strategic partnerships with several large companies and officially launching the brand image of Lucky Coffee, the coffee giant. As of January 2022, the number of stores exceeded 500, making it the second growth curve for Mixue Group. By June 9, 2022, the signing of the 1,000th Lucky Coffee store was completed.

The controllable store opening costs, a lively "selling atmosphere," and a "uniform brand management" strategy ensure that Lucky Coffee maintains minimal differences among its stores in various market segments. This consistency in hygiene, quality control, service, and ambiance is crucial. Based on this foundation, the profitability model for individual stores, along with the breadth and efficiency of the supply chain, guarantees both the survival rate and profit margins for each location. In the era of low-profit margins in the restaurant industry, the supply chain has become a competitive advantage. Under the principle that "those who master the supply chain hold the key to success," solidifying the supply chain and initiating growth has become a common understanding among restaurant brands.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

This study reviewed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), summarizing the factors that may have influenced consumers' coffee choices , namely perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, and social stimuli. Based on this, it also synthesized relevant research related to consumer

purchasing decisions. After becoming familiar with the above content, the research direction of this paper was clarified, and the research framework was established, as shown in Figure 2.1.
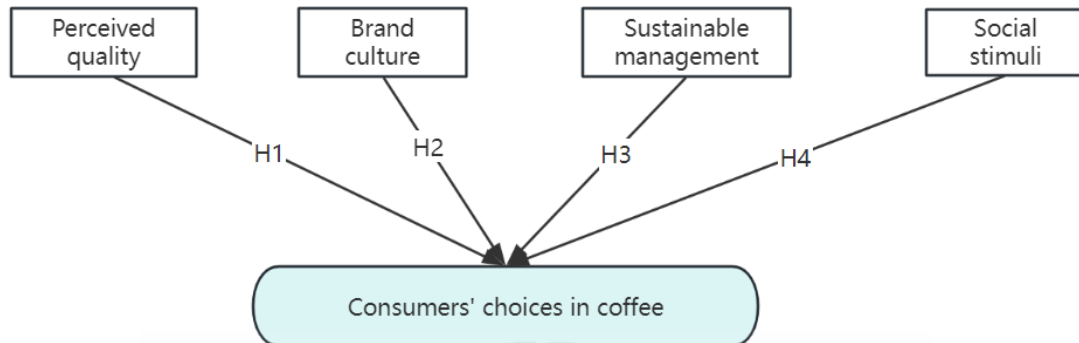
Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Based on the specific objective of this study, it was decided to obtain the necessary data for the study through an online survey. Therefore, this chapter explains the research methodology, aimed at gaining a more precise understanding of the decision-making process consumers undergo when selecting coffee.

3.2 Research Design

This study used a quantitative method. The survey for the consumers' coffee choices is divided into six parts based on different variables. The first part mainly collects personal characteristic information of the participants, including consumers' gender, age, educational level, and occupational classification. The second part explores the variables of this study.

The items in the second part use a five-point Likert scale for measurement, with scores ranging from 1 to 5, indicating: 1 - Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Neutral, 4 - Agree, and 5 - Strongly Agree. The survey items are aligned with the research focus of this study. After reviewing the literature, referencing established scales from both domestic and international sources, and consulting with advisors, the research refined the phrasing and item formulation to produce the final version of the survey questionnaire for this study.

3.3 Population and Sample

The population of this study was consumers who have purchased Lucky Cup products. To collect relevant data, electronic questionnaires were distributed in six WeChat welfare groups associated with Lucky Cup, a total of 280 responses were collected. This approach not only ensured the relevance of the respondents but also effectively increased the response rate of the questionnaires. In the WeChat groups, consumers could conveniently and quickly participate in the survey while leveraging the influence of social networks to encourage more users to share their purchasing experiences and feedback.

3.4 Hypothesis

This study proposes the following research hypotheses:

Hypotheses 1: Perceived quality has a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices.

Hypotheses 2: Brand culture has a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices.

Hypotheses 3: Sustainable management has a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices.

Hypotheses 4: Social stimuli has a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices.

3.5 Research Instrument

3.5.1 Perceived Quality Scale

Perceived quality is a comprehensive evaluation made by consumers based on both intrinsic factors of a product (such as performance and durability) and extrinsic factors (such as brand references and price). It is one of the key factors influencing consumer choices.

The perceived quality scale consists of five items, as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Perceived Quality Scale

1. The taste of coffee is the main reason that determines whether I make a purchase.
2. I believe that high-quality coffee is worth a higher price.
3. I think that well-known coffee brands offer better quality than lesser-known brands.
4. The freshness of coffee beans is an important factor in my purchasing decision.
5. I am willing to pay more for coffee that I perceive to be of better quality.

3.5.2 Brand Culture Scale

Brand culture is one of the most valuable intangible assets of a company. Due to the asymmetry of information between buyers and sellers in the market, consumers cannot fully and clearly understand the product information provided by sellers. Brand culture serves as an effective tool for consumers to identify product quality and risks,

thereby influencing their purchasing decisions. Strong brands convey a sense of high quality and low risk to consumers, which leads to higher purchasing decisions.

When quantifying brand culture, this study drew on the studies by Dong (2019) and Mohsin (2017), which include a total of eight items, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Brand Culture Scale

6. I like brands with a unique personality.
7. The personality of this brand reflects the character traits I aspire to have.
8. The brand image influences my purchasing preferences.
9. I buy Lucky Cup coffee because it is well-known.
10. I am impressed by the positive vision that Lucky Cup portrays.
11. The spiritual symbolism conveyed by Lucky Cup resonates with me.
12. I place great importance on Lucky Cup's development history.
13. Lucky Cup's story leaves a deep impression on me.

3.5.3 Sustainable Management Scale

Corporate sustainable management are increasingly becoming an important factor influencing consumer decisions. When consumers recognize a company's efforts in environmental protection, resource conservation, and social responsibility, they are more likely to choose to support brands that align with sustainable development principles.

Bao (2019) identified three forms of factors that represented sustainable business practices. First, environmental protection activities aimed at preserving the ecological environment and effectively utilizing limited resources; second, the regulated operation of all production and operational methods according to economic principles and ecological optimization principles including developing eco-friendly products and selecting environmentally friendly production methods, finally, the concept of environmental protection applied to a company's production and operational activities, including pollution management, the use of eco-friendly production equipment, and energy-saving, low-carbon practices.

The sustainable management scale consists of five items, as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Sustainable Management Scale

14. I prefer to choose brands that focus on sustainable development.

15. Lucky Cup actively incorporates environmental factors into its products and services.

16. I am willing to pay a higher price for products that meet sustainable development standards.

17. I actively support brands that adopt environmentally friendly production methods.

18. I believe that a company's sustainable development practices can enhance its market competitiveness.

3.5.4 Social Stimuli Scale

Social stimuli significantly influence the decision-making process of consumers. When consumers find themselves in specific social environments, their purchasing behaviors are often affected by those around them. For example, recommendations and evaluations from friends, family, or colleagues can greatly impact an individual's perception of a particular product or brand.

The social stimuli in this study were adapted from the scale developed by Zhang et al. (2020) and modified according to the specific circumstances of this research, consisting of a total of five items, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Social Stimuli Scale

19. The decisions of my friends and family have a certain influence on whether I purchase coffee.

20. I often ask for the opinions of those around me when buying coffee.

21. I typically purchase coffee that is recommended by my friends and family.

22. Many people around me buy Lucky Cup coffee, so I choose to buy it as well.

23. I believe that consuming coffee is necessary.

3.5.5 Consumers' Coffee Choices Scale

Consumers' coffee choices scale was adapted from established scales, primarily based on the research of Eggert et al,. (2002), and consists of four items, as shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Consumers' Coffee Choices Scale

| 24. My understanding of coffee plays a significant role in my decision-making process. |
| 25. The more I learn about coffee, the more inclined I am to purchase it. |
| 26. In the future, I will continue to buy Lucky Cup coffee. |
| 27. When someone asks for my opinion, I will recommend purchasing Lucky Cup coffee. |

3.6 Reliability and Validity Analysis of the Scale

3.6.1 Questionnaire Reliability Analysis

This study used Cronbach's α coefficient to test internal consistency reliability, assessing the credibility of the scales. SPSS was employed to analyze all the variables involved in the research: perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, social stimuli, and consumers' coffee choices. .

Table 3.6 Results of Questionnaire Reliability Analysis

Factors	N	Cronbach's α
Perceived quality	5	0.831
Brand culture	8	0.762
Sustainable management	5	0.782
Social stimuli	5	0.817
Consumers' coffee choices	4	0.834

In Table 3.6, the results indicated that the Cronbach's α values for all relevant scales exceeded the standard threshold of 0.70. This demonstrates that the variables in the study exhibit strong internal consistency and good reliability

3.6.2 Questionnaire Validity Analysis

For the validity analysis of the scales, this study employed the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and Bartlett's test of sphericity.

Table 3.7 Results of Questionnaire Validity Analysis

Number of KMO Sampling Suitability Quantities		0.862
The Sphericity Test of the Bartlett	Approximate chi-square	3127.620
	df	267
	Sig.	0.000

In Table 3.7, the KMO coefficients for the scales involved in the research were greater than 0.75, exceeding the standard value of 0.70. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant at the 0.001 level. These results indicate that the scales selected for the study possess good validity.

3.7 Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed online using Wenjuanxing. To ensure the validity of the data, it was specified that the respondents must be consumers who have purchased Lucky Cup products; those who did not meet this criterion were not required to complete the questionnaire. Ultimately, a total of 280 sample responses were collected. After eliminating duplicate IP addresses and invalid data, such as responses that were nearly identical or exhibited highly patterned answering behavior, 265 valid questionnaires were obtained, resulting in a response rate of 94.6%.

3.8 Data Analysis

First, this study required a descriptive statistical analysis of the collected questionnaire data to examine the personal characteristics of the respondents. Subsequently, SPSS was used to conduct a correlation analysis on the collected data. The purpose of this correlation analysis was to examine whether there were associations between the various variables and the defined dimensions. To further investigate the relationships among these factors, linear regression analysis was employed to test the basic pathways of the model and to validate the proposed hypotheses.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter describes the data analysis methods used to examine the various factors influencing consumers' coffee choices. Specifically, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were used to explore the relationships and the impact of the variables. The key variables in this study include perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, and social stimuli. Through these methods, this study aims to reveal the role and relative impact of each factor in the consumer decision process, providing valuable insights and practical guidance for the coffee industry.

4.2 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The first step in processing the survey data was conducting descriptive statistical analysis to examine the collected data. This includes analyzing the personal characteristics of the respondents: gender, age, educational level, and occupational classification.

Table 4.1 Demographics

Items	Classification	N	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	125	47.2
	Female	140	52.8
Age	Under 18 years old	0	0
	18-25 years old	48	18.1
	26-30 years old	92	34.7
	31-40 years old	81	30.6
	41 years old and above	44	16.6
Educational level	High school or below	0	0
	Undergraduate degree	147	55.6
	Graduate degree or above	118	44.4
Occupational classification	Company employee	112	42.3
	University/college student	47	17.7
	Teacher	12	4.5
	Doctor	24	9.1
	Civil servant	13	4.9
	Freelancer	50	18.9
	Other	7	2.6

As shown in Table 4.1, approximately 47.2% of the sample population were male, while 52.8% were female. From the perspective of age distribution, there were no respondents under the age of 18, mainly because minors are generally not suitable for coffee consumption. Individuals aged 18 to 25 accounted for 18.1% of the sample, those aged 26 to 30 represented 34.7%, individuals aged 31 to 40 made up approximately 30.6%, and those over 41 accounted for 16.6%.

Regarding educational background, there were no respondents with a high school diploma (including vocational school) or lower. Respondents with a bachelor's degree made up about 55.6% of the total, while those with a master's degree or higher accounted for 44.4%. This indicates that the survey sample had a generally high educational level, predominantly comprising individuals with a bachelor's degree or above.

In terms of occupational distribution, 42.3% of respondents were company employees, making this the most represented group. Students accounted for 17.7%, followed by freelancers at 18.9%, showing that these two groups also held a significant share of the sample. School teachers represented 4.5%, doctors 9.1%, and government workers 4.9%. Finally, other occupations not listed made up 2.6% of the sample.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The purpose of correlation analysis is to test whether there is an association between variables. According to Pearson's correlation rule, if the correlation coefficient is less than 0.3, it indicates a weak correlation; if the correlation coefficient is between 0.3 and 0.6, it indicates a moderate correlation; and if the correlation coefficient is greater than 0.6, it indicates a strong correlation between the variables.

Table 4.2 Results of Correlation Analysis

Dimension	Perceived quality	Brand culture	Sustainable management	Social stimuli	Consumers' coffee choices
Perceived quality	1				
Brand culture	.563**	1			
Sustainable management	.574**	.542**	1		
Social stimuli	.611**	.585**	.591**	1	
Consumers' coffee choices	.628**	.574**	.553**	.561**	1

As shown in Table 4.2 the correlation between perceived quality and consumers' coffee choices is 0.628, which is significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a significant positive correlation between perceived quality and consumers' coffee choices. The correlation between brand culture and consumers' coffee choices is 0.574, also significant at the 0.01 level, showing a significant positive correlation between brand culture and consumers' coffee choices. The correlation between sustainable management and consumers' coffee choices is 0.553, significant at the 0.01 level, indicating a significant positive correlation. Lastly, the correlation between social stimuli and consumers' coffee choices is 0.561, significant at the 0.01 level, demonstrating a significant positive correlation between social stimuli and consumers' coffee choices.

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 4.3 Results of Multiple Regression Analysis

	Non-standardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	p	R^2	Adjusting R^2	F	DW	VIF
	B	Standard Error	Beta							
（Constant）	.177	.126	-	1.323	.000					-
Perceived quality	.421	.065	.391	5.524	.021					4.218
Brand culture	.387	.073	.374	2.491	.000	.614	.609	134.271	1.829	4.467
Sustainable management	.362	.043	.385	3.591	.037					4.521
Social stimuli	.465	.058	.441	4.778	.017					4.772

The coefficient of determination R^2 for this model is 0.614, and the adjusted R^2 is 0.609, indicating a good fit to the data, with 61.4% of the variance explained by the independent variables. The F-statistic is 134.271 with a very low significance level, demonstrating that the overall model is significant. The DW statistic is 1.829, which is close to 2, suggesting there is no significant autocorrelation issue.

For perceived quality, the non-standardized coefficient B is 0.421 with a standard error of 0.065. The standardized coefficient Beta is 0.391, with a t-value of 5.524 and a significance level (p-value) of 0.021. This indicates that perceived quality has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable. The VIF value is 4.218, suggesting that multicollinearity is within an acceptable range.

For brand culture, the non-standardized coefficient B is 0.387 with a standard error of 0.073. The standardized coefficient Beta is 0.374, with a t-value of2.491 and a significance level (p-value) of 0.000. This indicates that brand culture has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable. The VIF value is 4.467, suggesting that multicollinearity is within an acceptable range.

For sustainable management, the non-standardized coefficient B is 0.362 with a standard error of 0.043. The standardized coefficient Beta is 0.385, with a t-value of 3.591 and a significance level (p-value) of 0.037. This indicates that sustainable management has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable. The VIF value is 4.521, suggesting that multicollinearity is within a manageable range.

For social stimuli, the non-standardized coefficient B is 0.465 with a standard error of 0.058. The standardized coefficient Beta is 0.441, with a t-value of 4.778 and a significance level (p-value) of 0.017. This indicates that social stimuli have a significant positive effect on the dependent variable. The VIF value is 4.772, suggesting that multicollinearity is within an acceptable range.

Therefore, perceived quality, brand culture, sustainable management, and social stimuli all have a significant positive impact on consumers' choices in coffee.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Perceived Quality Has a Positive Impact on Consumers' Coffee Choices

The research results indicate that perceived quality has a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices, thus confirming Hypothesis 1. This suggests that consumers often make purchasing decisions based on their perceptions of certain characteristics of the coffee. Enhancing perceived quality can not only attract more consumer attention but also strengthen customer loyalty to the brand. Therefore, businesses can improve perceived quality by refining coffee production processes, selecting high-quality raw materials, and providing excellent customer service.

5.1.2 Brand Culture Has a Positive Impact on Consumers' Coffee Choices

The research results indicate that brand culture has a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices, thus confirming Hypothesis 2. This culture not only influences consumers' perceptions of the brand but also shapes their purchasing behavior. Brand culture can effectively establish an emotional connection with target consumers. When consumers feel that the values represented by a brand align with their own lifestyle or beliefs, they are more likely to resonate with it and, consequently, prefer that brand's coffee.

Moreover, when faced with numerous options, consumers tend to choose brands that they perceive as having unique cultures and stories. The transmission of brand culture means that consumers are not only satisfying their taste preferences when purchasing coffee but are also seeking a lifestyle and identity that resonates with them.

5.1.3 Sustainable Management Has a Positive Impact on Consumers' Coffee Choices

The research results indicate that sustainable management has a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices, thus confirming Hypothesis 3. As environmental awareness increases, more consumers are beginning to pay attention to the sustainability of the products they purchase. Consumers are more inclined to choose coffee brands that utilize sustainable materials and methods in their production processes. This transparency and sense of responsibility can enhance consumers' trust in the brand, prompting them to make purchasing decisions and fostering positive word-of-mouth communication.

5.1.4 Social Stimuli Have a Positive Impact on Consumers' Coffee Choices

The research results indicate that social stimuli have a positive impact on consumers' coffee choices, thus confirming Hypothesis 4. This conclusion emphasizes the importance of social factors in the consumer decision-making process. For instance, with the rise of social media, consumers increasingly rely on online reviews and recommendations. Many people check the opinions of friends and family regarding specific types of coffee before making a purchase, or they refer to trending discussions and recommendations on social media. When consumers see trusted individuals endorsing a particular brand or product, they are more likely to be influenced and choose that brand of coffee, thereby driving their purchasing decisions.

5.2 Recommendation

5.2.1 Implementing Refined Standards for Quality Control

Regarding the product itself, it is essential to implement refined standards for quality control of coffee beans, ensuring strict oversight of food hygiene and safety. To cater to local consumers' needs, coffee shops should actively introduce localized innovations and limited-edition flavors to achieve product diversification and customization. For instance, they could launch seasonal beverages that incorporate seasonal ingredients into the coffee. Additionally, they could create regional specialties by combining coffee with locally produced flavors, offering limited-edition products that capture consumers' attention.

### 5.2.2 Fully Exploring Coffee Culture to Enrich the Brand's Essence

In terms of coffee brand culture, Lucky Cup should use coffee as a medium to establish a bridge and connection between consumers and popular culture, subtly influencing consumer behavior. The coffee brand can engage with various scenarios such as top-tier sports events, music festivals, and film festivals in China. For instance, they can showcase a 5G smart robot AI barista demonstrating coffee-making skills on-site, providing consumers with a futuristic and digital experience.

Additionally, to enhance consumers' diverse offline experience, the brand can incorporate popular Guochao elements, bookstore culture, and self-service concepts. By combining coffee with Guochao, coffee with bookstores, and coffee with unmanned stores, they can open themed cafes that offer consumers a more comprehensive and modern offline experience and lifestyle, ultimately leading to better word-of-mouth and positive consumer feedback.

5.2.3 Creating More Convenient In-Store Services

Coffee brands need to standardize food preparation processes, offer comprehensive payment methods and supporting equipment, and streamline the ordering and pickup procedures to attract consumers. Therefore, Lucky Cup can establish a reasonable coffee-making workflow, standardize operations on a production line, and unify the portion sizes and flavors of its products. Regular employee training and knowledge-sharing sessions can also enhance service efficiency, allowing consumers to receive faster service.

Additionally, coffee can meet the needs of different customer groups by providing a wide range of payment options, including cash, card payments, facial recognition, self-service scanning, and Apple Pay. Lucky Cup can also offer convenient services tailored to its customer demographics, such as designated smoking areas, shared power banks, charging outlets for laptops, and umbrellas, thereby creating a more convenient experience for consumers and increasing their intention to purchase coffee.
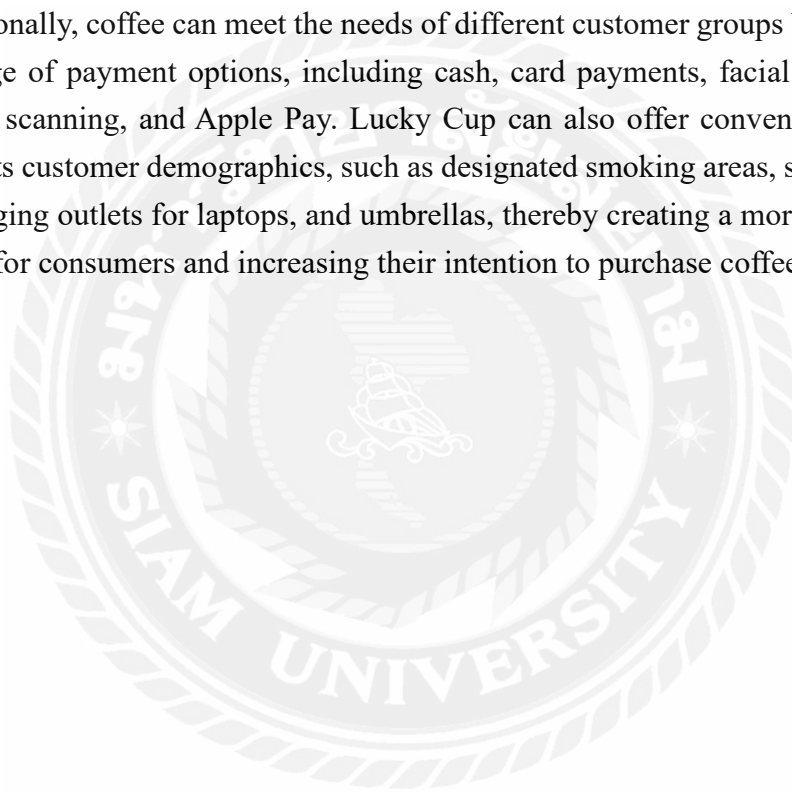
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Appendix

Dear Friend,

Hello! I would like to express my sincere gratitude for taking the time out of your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Please read the questions carefully and provide your answers; your assistance is crucial for the success of this research and will offer valuable guidance for coffee brands to better serve consumers in the future. I assure you that this questionnaire poses no risk of privacy leakage and will only be used for research purposes. Thank you once again for your generous support!

Section One: Basic Information

Please mark "√" in front of the options that apply to you.

1. Your gender:
   ☐ Male
   ☐ Female

2. Your age:
   ☐ Under 18 years old
   ☐ 18-25 years old
   ☐ 26-30 years old
   ☐ 31-40 years old
   ☐ 41 years old and above

3. Your educational level:
   ☐ High school or below
   ☐ Undergraduate degree
   ☐ Graduate degree or above

4. Your occupational classification
   ☐ Company employee
   ☐ University/college student
   ☐ Teacher
   ☐ Doctor
   ☐ Civil servant
   ☐ Freelancer
   ☐ Other

Section Two: Questionnaire Items

Please mark "√" in front of the options that apply to you. Based on your daily life, please express your opinions on your decision-making process regarding coffee choices by marking "√" in front of the corresponding options (1-5, where 1 indicates

strong disagreement and 5 indicates strong agreement).

Items	5	4	3	2	1
Perceived Quality					
1. The taste of coffee is the main reason that determines whether I make a purchase.					
2. I believe that high-quality coffee is worth a higher price.					
3. I think that well-known coffee brands offer better quality than lesser-known brands.					
4. The freshness of coffee beans is an important factor in my purchasing decision.					
5. I am willing to pay more for coffee that I perceive to be of better quality.					
Brand Culture					
6. I like brands with a unique personality.					
7. The personality of this brand reflects the character traits I aspire to have.					
8. The brand image influences my purchasing preferences.					
9. I buy Lucky Cup coffee because it is well-known.					
10. I am impressed by the positive vision that Lucky Cup portrays.					
11. The spiritual symbolism conveyed by Lucky Cup resonates with me.					
12. I place great importance on Lucky Cup's development history.					
13. Lucky Cup's story leaves a deep impression on me.					
Sustainable Management					
14. I prefer to choose brands that focus on sustainable development.					
15. Lucky Cup actively incorporates environmental factors into its products and services.					
16. I am willing to pay a higher price for products that meet sustainable development standards.					
17. I actively support brands that adopt environmentally friendly production methods.					
18. I believe that a company's sustainable development practices can enhance its market competitiveness.					

Social Stimuli					
19. The decisions of my friends and family have a certain influence on whether I purchase coffee.					
20. I often ask for the opinions of those around me when buying coffee.					
21. I typically purchase coffee that is recommended by my friends and family.					
22. Many people around me buy Lucky Cup coffee, so I choose to buy it as well.					
23. I believe that consuming coffee is necessary.					
Consumers' Coffee Choices					
24. My understanding of coffee plays a significant role in my decision-making process.					
25. The more I learn about coffee, the more inclined I am to purchase it.					
26. In the future, I will continue to buy Lucky Cup coffee.					
27. When someone asks for my opinion, I will recommend purchasing Lucky Cup coffee.					