

Running Title: Creating Consumptionscapes in Starbucks in China

**From Servicescape to Consumptionscape:
A Photo-Elicitation Study of Starbucks in the New China**

**Meera Venkatraman
Associate Professor of Marketing
Sawyer Business School
Suffolk University**

**Teresa Nelson
Elizabeth J. McCandless Professor in Entrepreneurship
School of Management
Simmons College**

*Forthcoming in the Journal of International Business Studies
2008*

From Servicescape to Consumptionscape: A Photo-Elicitation Study of Starbucks in the New China

Abstract

A servicescape can be viewed as the frozen potential of a consumptionscape which is unleashed when consumers “twist” the resources of its built environment for their own purposes. In this paper we explore how young, urban Chinese consumers transform the iconic global brand Starbucks into a consumptionscape through their enactment of personally meaningful experiences, roles, and identities in the setting. We employ the qualitative research methodology of photo-elicitation by having consumers record their experience in a Starbucks in Beijing through photography and later using these images as probes in a depth interview. The implications for new global servicescapes in local markets are discussed.

Keywords:

Photo-Elicitation

China

Servicescape

Global Brand Meaning

Adoption of Innovation

Starbucks

INTRODUCTION

The term servicescape connotes a physical, material setting designed and built to shape consumption behavior. Conceived by Bitner as a human built environment, the servicescape is now understood to encompass design factors (e.g. layout, furnishings, and decor), ambient conditions (e.g. lighting and temperature), and social interactions amongst and between customers and employees (Baker, 1987; Bitner, 1992, Sherry 1998). Construction of a servicescape sets the stage for consumption or to coin a phrase based on Deighton (1992) -- a servicescape is the frozen potential of a consumptionscape (Ger and Belk, 1996). Consumers transform it into a consumptionscape when they act on and “twist” its resources (Aubert-Gamet, 1997) to achieve their own purposes. They engage the servicescape in the construction of experiences that fit with their life themes and projects and connect to culturally embedded rituals and meanings (Arnould and Price, 1993; Schmitt, 2003; Sherry 1998). The examination of the consumer’s role in using the resources of the servicescape to compose meaningful experiences thereby transforming it into a consumptionscape is one of the contributions of this paper.

The socio-cultural context of the consumer is crucial because it frames possibilities for thought, beliefs, and actions and makes the emergence of certain meanings more likely than others (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Thompson, 1997). Our context is the young, upwardly mobile, urban Chinese consumer or the “New China”. These consumers are in a liminal stage of life – composing new roles and identities- and acquiring the accoutrements: brands, products, services and experiences that contribute to the creation of their evolving selves. Having acquired household goods like TVs and washing machines, and personal electronics like computers, they are now avid purchasers of leisure and consumption goods and services like coffee shops, movies, and theatre (Kilby and Carter, 2006). The acquisitiveness of this large and ripe market is fuelling the growth of the Chinese economy (McEwen, Fang, Zhang, and Burkholder, 2006). Our focus is one particular consumption experience- that of the iconic experiential brand Starbucks and its role in the creation of new experiences and identities for this slice of the Chinese market.

Starbucks is a particularly relevant and meaningful site for this research for two important reasons. First, its built environment is a key strategic tool for the company so that the quality of its store design including layout, lighting, and furnishings reinforce its commitment to fine coffee products (Koehn, 2001 pp. 243). Second, the company's global strategy focuses on managing "the consumer experience" which "includes not only what coffee customers drink, the interactions they have with store employees, and the visual environment; it also encompasses the coffee aromas in the air, background music, and overall ambience of company stores" (Koehn, 2001, pp. 247). In the study of global servicescapes in the Chinese context, McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken with their focus on quality, value, and service represent the first generation of entrants (Watson, 1997) and Starbucks represents the next. It is an upscale, high-end brand seeking to make an emotional connection with the young, professional, upwardly mobile Chinese market. The focus on this "New China" market and their use of the resources of the built environment of an iconic global experiential servicescape to construct meaningful experiences is another contribution of this paper.

Consumption experience is subjectively felt and individually experienced and can only be credibly reported by informants who are in the setting (Caru and Cova, 2003). This made it incumbent for us to use an emic perspective or the actor's reporting of the experience rather than impose our understanding on the phenomena. Consequently, we had informants take photographs of their experience as it was happening and later used these photographs as probes in depth interviews. This qualitative research methodology is known as photo-elicitation and although very well established in anthropology, sociology, and leisure research, is less well known to International Business scholars. The demonstration of photo-elicitation as a useful research technique in International Business is another purpose of this paper.

In the next section we review literature in two different fields that provide the conceptual underpinnings for our research. The first field examines the impact of the built environment on consumption behavior, and the second studies global brands in local markets.

CONCEPTUAL GROUNDING

The Role of the Built Environment

Two intertwined streams of research, “servicescapes” and “atmospherics”, help us understand the effect of built environments on consumption behavior. Bitner coined the term “servicescapes” and drawing on research in marketing, environmental and cognitive psychology, and ergonomics laid the foundation for the study of the effect of built environments on consumer thought, emotions, and actions (Bitner, 1992). Recognizing that people experience an environment holistically, her work none-the-less decomposed the servicescape into three dimensions: ambient conditions; space and function; and signs, symbols, and artifacts. Based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory in environmental psychology, Bitner developed a framework and an inventory of propositions for understanding the impact of the built environment on employees, customers, and their interactions.

The term “atmospherics” is credited to Kotler who focused on understanding the impact of built retail environments on buying behavior (Kotler, 1973). “Atmospherics” is the conscious design of buying environments “to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his (sic) purchase probability”. Kotler argues that management should bring the resources of three art forms: architecture, interior design, and window dressing, to bear on the design of built environments. Further he argues that it is buyers’ perceptions of the space that is critical and since buyers understand environments through their senses, sensory information about the atmosphere must be considered as for example color, brightness, size, and shape of the visual stimuli and volume and pitch of the auditory.

Although the overall intent of the “servicescapes” and “atmospherics” research is similar, there are distinctions between them. They are different in origin - retailing research is older; methodologies employed - the servicescapes research has tended to use more interpretive research methodologies (Sherry, 1998); and biography - journal outlets tend to be different. Further, while the servicescapes literature recognizes that servicescapes are commercial places designed and built by marketers to shape consumption behavior, researchers in the field have focused on consumers’ use of the space for the

production of personally significant experiences, meanings, and purposes (Arnould, Price, and Tierney, 1998; Aubert-Gamet, 1997). Recent research shows that consumers assert some agency even in seemingly overpowering spectacle-like retail environments (e.g. the ESPN Zone Chicago) by resisting and subverting rules (Kozinets et al., 2004). In contrast, research in the atmospherics tradition has tended to focus on the relationship between elements of the built environment and customer and employee responses including enjoyment, time in store, items examined, information acquired, purchases, and satisfaction for consumers ; and mood, effort, commitment, attitude, knowledge, and skill for employees (Turley and Milliman, 2000). Overall, the servicescape literature tends to take a more holistic view of the built environment and is given to broad categorizations like physical cues, people, and processes (Sherry, 1998), while the atmospherics research is concerned with detail, carefully categorizing the multitude of variables that make up the built environment into external, general interior, layout and design, point-of-purchase and decoration variables, and human variables (Turley and Milliman, 2000).

Despite these differences there is a cross-pollination of ideas and constructs between the fields. For example, Sherry in “The Soul of the Company Store” (1998) investigates the nature of emplacement and brandscapes in the hyper retail environment of the Chicago Nike Town and “unpacks some of the design features” like suspended statues, lamps/altars, memorabilia that contribute to the engagement with the servicescape. And Hightower, Brady, and Baker (2002) examine the impact of a servicescape on affect, value, and behavioral intentions by using a multi-item scale that measures a holistic response to the servicescape instead of examining the relationship of specific servicescape elements of a baseball stadium, like crowdedness, to specific outcomes like patron response.

Since we are interested in exploring the construction of meaning for the Starbucks experience by the New China, we ground our research in the servicescapes tradition of doing interpretive qualitative research. We capture the experience through images taken by our informants and in depth interviews which enable us to get at the experience from their point of view. We expect that consumers will enact personally significant experiences, life projects, and life themes in the servicescape. Further, research in

the atmospheric tradition suggests that specific interior design and décor elements of the Starbucks will feature prominently in the construction of these meanings.

The Global Brand in a Local Market

How does a Western, high-end, unique servicescape like Starbucks impact local consumption tastes, practices, and lifestyles when it enters a new market? Some might argue that like other global servicescapes before it (e.g. McDonald's); Starbucks will become the agent for the imposition of standardized codes of practice and behavior that undermine local voices, practices, and lifestyles and the very nature of local consumption cultures (Ritzer, 1973). Indeed, the experience of global brands like Coca-Cola and McDonald's, who entered foreign markets with aggressive expansion plans and considerable marketing and financial clout, reveals that they do impact the local culture in significant ways (Watson, 1997). However, at the same time a considerable body of research reveals that the outcome is more complicated than the replacement of old ways with new (Ger and Belk, 1996; Miller, 1998; Watson, 1997). Local cultures, be they more or less economically affluent, are far from passive in their response to foreign brands. Consumers can appropriate the brand to the local consumption milieu - altering its uses and functionality - resulting in the transformation of brand meaning. The result is the fusion of global and local meanings as is evidenced by a substantial body of research on inexpensive consumer consumables like Coca-Cola, more expensive consumer durables like scooters, and popular culture products like TV shows and soap-operas (Ger and Belk, 1996).

The experience of McDonald's in Southeast Asia since the mid-seventies is illustrative (Watson, 1997). Its impact on local cultures is irrefutable: in Hong Kong it has replaced traditional teahouses as a venue for breakfast, in Japan people now eat with their hands, and in Taiwan French fries is the snack food of choice for young people. But while McDonald's has affected significant change in consumption habits, these changes must be considered in the context of larger societal and cultural changes sweeping these countries. New classes of prosperous consumers were emerging and rising incomes produced new family structures as newly wed couples were choosing to live independently and not in extended family

households as had been the tradition. The focus became the needs and wants of the married couple “which brought with it an entire set of attitudes and practices that undermine older assumptions regarding the meaning of life” (Watson, 1997; pp. 16). Simultaneously, there was a decline in the birthrate and an associated heightened focus of time, money, and attention on children. McDonald’s targeted these children and they in turn made the company’s servicescape their own. For example, in many East Asian countries teenagers can be seen hanging out in the McDonald’s for hours after school, using it a leisure center and effectively taking the “fast” out of fast-food. So much so that for an entire generation of Japanese and Hong Kong children who has grown up with McDonald’s it does not represent something “foreign”. Watson argues that for them it is “local” cuisine.

This suggests that the New China will appropriate the meaning of the Starbucks commercial space to its own purposes. How this will happen will be contingent amongst other things on the resources that Starbucks has to offer and the relationship of those resources to consumers’ life projects and life themes. Starbucks is a fundamentally different experience from McDonald’s, Pizza Hut, and Kentucky Fried Chicken. The latter differentiated themselves in the marketplace on the basis of what Pine and Gilmore (2001) categorize as service: efficiency, modernity, and cleanliness. Starbucks, on the other hand, is an iconic emotional brand, and emotional brands become meaningful in part because they become interwoven with the narratives of people’s lives. We expect that the narratives that New China consumers construct to give meaning to their Starbucks experience will be, to some extent, personally unique yet not idiosyncratic: they will be framed both by the firm’s actions and the cultural and social milieu in which the consumers live. In the next section we describe the site of the study, introduce photo-elicitation, and lay out the research methodology used for this study.

METHOD

Starbucks in China

Starbucks inaugurated its first store in China in 1999 and largely through cooperative arrangements with local partners had opened more than 300 stores by 2005, including locations in iconic

cultural heritage sites like Beijing's Forbidden City. In late 2005, signaling ambitious expansion plans, Starbucks appointed a senior VP to fill a newly created position of President of "Starbucks Greater China". Starbucks' Global Strategist Howard Schultz, said, "We're talking about thousands of stores, where China will become absolutely the second-largest market in the world for Starbucks, second to North America" (Ouchi, 2005).

Study Site

A Starbucks in the Modern Plaza on Haidian Road in Northwest Beijing was the site of this research study. The commercial space is situated at the corner of a multi-story shopping/entertainment complex, separated by a plaza from a frenetically busy four-lane boulevard. The entire side of the coffee shop that fronts the street is glass, allowing both passersby to peek in and patrons to gaze out at the plaza and the street. The shop is spacious and encompasses a number of different zones: the counter on the right of the entrance where patrons can order drinks, cakes, and light foods; the open space on the left with round tables that seat two or three people; another seating area in the rear set up like a proto-typical American living room with sofas and chairs arranged around a coffee table in front of a fireplace; and a more dimly-lit space of four small tables with chairs in the very back.

Photo-Elicitation

The distinguishing feature of Photo-elicitation, as we used it, is that the informants took photographs of their experience as it was happening in the Starbucks and later these images were presented to them one-by-one in a depth interview when they were asked to describe what they were thinking, feeling, and doing as they took each picture (Collier, 1967; Heisley and Levy, 1991; Ziller, 1990). In this way we transported the informants back to the experience and had them reconstruct it frame-by-frame describing the experience in their own words. We preferred this inside-out emic perspective since the reports come from the only credible informant- the person who had the experience. Photo-elicitation also elicits rich descriptions of the physical layout and emotional reactions to the

servicescape by facilitating deep dives by the informants or helping them go below conscious, surface level observations to connect to deeper, submerged feelings, symbols, myths, and metaphors (Collier and Collier, 1986; Samuels, 2004; Ziller, 1990; Zaltman, 2003).

Recent advances in neurological research have shown that a bulk of peoples' thoughts and feelings are below the level of consciousness, with the result that those within easy reach represent the tip of the iceberg (Zaltman, 2003). These finding challenge researchers interested in consumer-place interactions to use techniques that help people access and communicate beyond surface level factual phenomena. A plethora of evidence establishes that photo-elicited interviews are one such technique: they can mine deeper shafts into the subconscious than words-alone interviews (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Collier, 1967; Samuels, 2004). And, since the different senses are connected, photographs can also trigger sounds, smells, and other sensations experienced. The effectiveness of photographs as probes is supported by recent research from cognitive scientists and neurobiologists suggesting that thought is based on images, not words (Zaltman, 2003).

In addition, there is evidence that photo-elicited interviews engage the informant: "Subject cooperation is high, and there is a general atmosphere of sincerity, perhaps because a photograph is not perceived as a throwaway....Not infrequently, the subjects request copies of the sets of photos, or request to keep the camera for an additional day or more in order to take a particularly 'important' photograph". A natural outcome of this engagement is that "interviews are long and productive" (Ziller, 1990, pp. 36). Samuels, who conducted both photo-elicited and word-only interviews, reports that, "The photo-elicited interviews were, on the whole, much longer than I had anticipated; indeed, most of the interviews lasted well longer than 1 hour and several interviews took almost 2 hours" (Samuels, 2004, pp.1531). This productiveness is particularly useful in the Chinese context, since informants generally are reluctant to open up and speak about themselves (Eckhardt, 2004). Based on studies that used a number of different qualitative research techniques, Eckhardt (2004) reports that "No matter how well designed the interview questions are, how comfortable the respondent is with the interviewer, how informal and /or structured

the discussion between the respondent and the researcher is, it is typical to receive one- and two-sentence answers to most questions”. We believe that by allowing the informants to express themselves both through picture-taking and in words, and by shifting the focus from the person to the images, we overcome some of these communication and cultural barriers.

Informants

Our informants were purposefully chosen to represent the New China consumer (Thompson, 1997). They were drawn from a pool of recent graduates of a prestigious Beijing university with degrees in finance going on to lucrative jobs with perquisites like international travel in the public and private sectors. On average they were 22 years old and six of the seven were female. Each had frequented Starbucks before, and when we recruited them they were told that the project involved -among other things- visiting Starbucks as they normally would. We gave them the equivalent of ten U.S. dollars to spend at Starbucks and equipped them with a 24-exposure disposable camera. Two informants, Cora and Sharon, chose to take a girlfriend; Cora took Shaojin and Sharon took Cindy. One informant, Jackie, went by herself and another Dawn took her boyfriend, Hudson, resulting in a sample of seven informants. We judged this sample to be sufficient for our purposes since our objective was interpretative research requiring intensive and not extensive data (Thompson, 1997). We were sanguine that the photo elicited interviews would be productive, as demonstrated not only in photo-elicitation research but also other methodologies like the Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) that use images (in this case metaphors) for in-depth probing. Validation studies for ZMET have found that “four to five depth interviews that are focused on identifying and understanding core themes can provide up to 90% of the information available from a larger set of interviews” (Coulter, Zaltman, and Coulter, 2001; pp. 4). Other studies have shown that seven or eight such in-depth interviews can be as productive as just as many focus groups (Zaltman, 2003; pp. 123).

Procedures and Instructions

We set up two meetings with the informants, the first a relatively short appointment to make initial contact, get demographic information, brief the informants, and help them feel at ease. During this meeting, we prepared the informants for their Starbucks visit by telling them that they should “take photographs that capture your experience as a customer of Starbucks”. Informants were instructed that there were no right or wrong approaches to the visit or the photo taking and that they should “show how you felt and what you did” using as many of the 24 camera exposures as they wished. They were also informed that the Starbucks manager had given them permission to photograph everything but the menu board with prices.

The photo-elicited interview took place within three days of their visit to the Starbucks. After making the informant comfortable, the interview began with the researcher presenting the photographs (which had been printed in the interim) one at a time in chronological order to the informant and prompting them with broad, non-directive statement like, “Describe this photograph to me” or “What do you see here?” Follow-up questions were used to clarify meaning, for example, if an informant used the word “home” we would ask what that word meant to them. Before the interviewer moved on to the next photograph they asked, “Is there any thing else you would like to tell me about this photograph?” The interviewer avoided leading the informant as much as possible and did not suggest ideas or favor a particular line of thinking or response. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed by a native English language speaker, and verified with the original tape by a native Mandarin speaker also fluent in English. Analysis involved close reading of the transcripts including identification of meaningful chunks of the interviews or quotes, interpretation, and discussion among the researchers (Spiggle, 1994; Thompson, 1997; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). The researchers first individually read a transcript carefully line-by-line, identifying quotes to represent the experience of the New China in Starbucks; and weaving these together to develop themes. They then met and presented their quotes and themes, discussed these, and negotiated disagreements. As each of the other transcripts was read, the themes were refined till the

researchers agreed on all the themes and quotes that captured them. Two independent judges verified the final categorization of the quotes with an 85% percent agreement rate.

FINDINGS

The experience of the consumption of Starbucks for our informants is captured by four themes: “Starbucks as Home;” “Starbucks as a Constellation of Personal Spaces;” “Starbucks as Exotic;” and “Starbucks as a Bridge between Cultures”. Next, we will discuss each of these themes and their link to elements in the built environment.

Starbucks as Home

Informants imbue the physical setting of the commercial, retail store of Starbucks with feelings of haven, warmth, security, and privacy typically associated with home (Mallett, 2004; Manzo, 2003). Inside Starbucks they felt free, comfortable, at peace, and relaxed in contrast to the noise and crowds on the outside in the streets. Sharon associates comfort and warmth with Starbucks, “There is something you can feel -- you are in a warm house, a big house and the atmosphere in there is very comfortable, very warm, and I can say, Oh, this is my home!” For Dawn, “It’s very warm, family .. environment. I like this feeling”. As Hudson comments, “(It) is like I’m at home, my own home...I feel I’m very free in that place...this is the most attractive point. That is why I come to Starbucks”.

Some informants singled out the glass doors at the entrance of the Starbucks as the line of demarcation - marking the point at which they left the confusion behind and entered into a safer, quieter place. According to Cora:

We ... took the two pictures of the contrast of busy life of modern society and the crowd, and the comfortable circumstances in Starbucks. You can see the outside and inside. Quite different...Outside of Starbucks there are many cars and busy walking people. So, I think this a very strong contrast...in Starbucks you can be relaxed and comfortable...They (customers) want to change a place, change circumstances, and go out of their office to find maybe a quiet place to work and maybe they will change their mood and makes them feel like working is an interesting thing.

Not only do the informants shut out the streets, but they also seek a break from the hectic pace of their lives and find a quieter place to relax as it illustrated in this quote from Cora:

In China we have a tale or story. It tells you a man in wartime, he take a boat and just go to some place....and he never saw in that place...people are so peaceful because it's so comfortable...they just relax themselves. It's a strong contrast with the wartime and peace time, so he stays in the place. I think if you see, this place is Starbucks ... it made me think of that story most and make me forgot those things, forget everything what has ... disturbed me, so just forget everything, I just relax myself. And maybe this place just provides a quiet, private place for people, intimate people, so I think that's a good relax place.

Here drawing upon an ancient Chinese fable, Cora uses the metaphors of war and peace to contrast Starbucks outside and inside, and like the man in the fable who takes a boat and journeys from war to peace, she goes to Starbucks to get away from things that disturb her and finds peace and quiet. In the literature on the meaning of home, this distinction between the inside and the outside- where the inside is private, safe, and relaxed and the outside is public and not within one's control- is integral to the meaning of home as haven (Mallett, 2004; Manzo, 2003; Sommerville, 1997). It can be traced back to Jacobean case law that declared that "The house to everyman is to him his castle and fortresse, as well as his defense against injury and violence, as for his repose" (Mallett, 2004, pp. 65). This attachment of the feelings associated with home to a place that is not their dwelling is consistent with research on the meaning of home which recognizes that while home and house are often conflated, a house is not necessarily a home and similarly a home is not necessarily a house. And, while home is most often associated with a place, it need not be a fixed place or exclusively one place. People can and do create homes or home-like spaces in a number of different places. In the case of our Chinese informants, we find that they attach the feelings of warmth, comfort, and haven to the commercial servicescape of a Starbucks and in the process convert it into a consumptionscape they label "home".

The role of elements of the built environment in evoking home

Informants link feelings of home to a number of design and decor elements like pictures on the walls, the shape of the light fixtures, and the decorations on the columns. According to Jackie it is "very

attractive and charming” and though it makes you feel at home, “it is not a common home”, it is very special. But, while the interviews are replete with mentions of the decorations, two decor elements stand out as triggering feelings of home: a fireplace and a sofa.

The fireplace with its gas-lit fire and stone front is the focal point of the back of the store. A coffee table is placed in front and it is surrounded by sofas and chairs. According to Dawn, “The fireplace is like family environment. I can feel this warmth, symbol of at peace. It’s very different from the outside of Starbucks... this reflects the home environment so this... reminds us that feeling of home ...I think it’s a symbol, it symbolizes a lot of peace”. This sentiment is echoed in the comments of a number of other informants, who associate the fireplace with home and family and with people talking to each other freely, just like they would at home. Similarly, the sofa emerges in the interviews time and again in association with feelings of home. Cora describes it as “soft”, “we love that sofa”, “most people like the sofa in Starbucks the most”. She goes on to say:

I think most of the people who went to a Starbucks, maybe they went out for a walk, just for relaxation, maybe some of the friends just talk here. So, the sofa gives us the impression that very relaxation, let me feel at home, this kind of thing. So, we took the picture of it and you can see this girl, just, she was reading a book, so I think maybe she’s not be working at the time and just want to relax.

As revealed in this quote the sofa captures the spirit of being at home: people getting away from work and from other duties and responsibilities and relaxing. Shaojin has a more complicated experience with the sofa: the first time she saw it through the window from the outside, she was very drawn to it and sat in it, but was asked to leave by an employee who told her that it was only for patrons of the store. But, she did not want and could not afford the coffee at the time; she wanted the sofa.

The thing ...I like...most is the comfortable sofa, and I think when I first saw the Starbucks I entered it and sat in the sofa, but the servant come and told me if you don’t consume coffee you can’t be here, so I get out because at the time I think for students like me, the price of coffee is a little bit high, so at the time I don’t want to consume some coffee, but I just want to sit in the sofa.

Starbucks as a Constellation of Personal Spaces

In the midst of “a lot of chatting” or “happy chat so that their voices are loud” as Shaojin put it, our informants called Starbucks a “personal world” and a “private space” where they can be by themselves or with their partners or colleagues. Sharon says, “Here you can do anything you like... You can do your homework, you can do business, you can do your chatting, reading and whatever things you like”. Shaojin expresses it as “anything you want to”. Some people carve out a place to study. Dawn:

I think there are many magazines. I took it (this photograph) because I think Starbucks is good place for study and I see many people in Starbucks with some books because they are studying. So I took this picture, it's a fact of Starbucks, one fact....one function of Starbucks. I think it's a good place for studying. It's not entertainment and not only entertainment place. It is also a study place. It's very calm and quiet here and a great place for study.

Dawn also reports, “I often saw it... many, many persons use his or her own computer and do their own thing”. Hudson considers Starbucks a place where people can feel free, liberated, and inspired to work in contrast to offices which are restrictive and constraining. He labels it an “open office”. Here we see informants who are purposefully carving out personal spaces to engage in the activities they want to, in environments of their choosing. They report that they have spent the better part of seventeen years working very hard trying to get into the best universities so that they can have “bright futures”. They have done so in circumstances that have offered them very few places for “backstage” or private behavior where they can slip out of character, let it all hang out, and be themselves. Eckhardt and Houston (1998) report that in China most consumption activities, like having a meal or socializing with friends, family, and colleagues, are “frontstage” or public and that there are few opportunities to have some privacy even at home because extended families tend to live together. Our informants are actively looking for places where they can have some privacy to talk with their friends, both of the same and opposite sex. Jackie:

...And I think it's typical of because customers there...because I think the main customers there are first boyfriend and girlfriend and second those boys and girls who are going to be boyfriends and girlfriends and they are good friends, maybe a boy and a girl or two girls, but I think....I saw, let's see, two boys there chit-chatting or like that. And we only order to cup of drink instead of some cakes, like only drink and we'll

chat while drinking. Of course, you always go to restaurants to chat and to talk about some work in the student union or on our study or maybe how to tell him something about like...I'm attracted by a boy, like those kinds of things. But sometimes we need a quieter place and a more romantic place or a place that makes you want to say that. So I think at this time Starbucks is a good choice. But sometimes we like Haagen-Dazs very much, but Haagen-Dazs is very expensive and you can find Starbucks everywhere. So...we almost choose Starbucks to do that.

In this quote our informant describes places with intimacy and romance. Jackie considers a number of different spaces: the student union, other restaurants, and Starbucks. The student union is deemed to be more public and noisy and less conducive to private conversations and the Haagen-Daz, which is another Western restaurant, is too expensive. Starbucks is chosen not only because it is “everywhere” but also because it offers the space they are looking for to be alone with their boyfriend- making it the perfect place for couples. Dawn and Hudson are one of these couples. They have a corner in Starbucks that has a very special meaning for them.

Dawn: And the corner has special meaning to us. That day is my 22nd birthday and he bring me to Starbucks and I wait for him in Starbucks and bought me a ring and flowers and he presented them to me and I am very happy that day. This corner is very special to us.

Hudson: It is a good place for lovers. It's private, we can sit each other very closely.

Dawn: And I also see some couples in Starbucks talking and chatting very happy.

Hudson:... Especially Starbucks is near our university. In our university the girls and boys live in different dorms, they have...they come to...Starbucks provides this home-like, home-style space for them to chat and eat.

The role of elements of the built environment in evoking personal spaces

In the quote above we see that the setting of “a corner” in the Starbucks has become inextricably intertwined with Hudson and Dawn's romance, complete with emblematic signifiers like the ring and flowers. And, it emerges that the layout of the retailscape of the Starbucks is seen as offering “different corners for different people and different people do different things” (Cindy). In addition these “corners” have different ambiances and ethos: some are “open” and have “happy chat”, while others are “quieter”

and “more romantic”. The informants linked the ethos of the corners to the arrangement of the furniture - tables, chairs, and sofas. Some of these spaces seat more than two people and have an open, public feeling; others seat one or two people and have a more intimate, private feeling. As Jackie puts it, “In Starbucks you have different kinds of table and chairs and you can choose. If you have four, you can sit on the sofa, and they (Starbucks) have sofa for two people and (also)...separate ones. So if you have four you can sit there, and (if) you are only two people you can sit like this, and if you are three you can sit like this. You can find any chair that you want there”. Cora:

And I think this table and chairs is provides for intimate friends, maybe close friends, maybe couples, maybe, but you can see there are only two seats, so I think I saw a very quiet, private place for like people to like say something they won't tell at a public circumstances.

Informants identified lighting as the other feature of the built environment that creates these different spaces or corners. According to Sharon, “This corner is very light corner. It's very bright ... not like that other corner where it's dark light”. The bright corner has wide round tables and groups of friends can sit there. The subtly lighted corner is where couples are whispering. Overall, the informants attribute some intentionality to Starbucks in evoking spaces by design of the ambiance through lighting, and the layout and decor through size and arrangement of tables and chairs. The informants themselves use these resources to create different personal worlds and in doing so convert the sterile environment of the servicescape into the meaning laden consumptionscape.

Starbucks as Exotic

Another theme that emerges is that Starbucks is “exotic”: strange and different, yet intriguing and exciting. In the words of our informants: “I do not quite understand”, “new”, “strange”, “mysterious” and “people feel awkward”. Yet, at the same time it is also “very interesting”.

The informants find Starbucks strange at many different levels. The drink coffee itself is new to most Chinese and they know very little about it. As Jackie put it, “Before (I went to Starbucks), I didn't know there are so many different types of coffee and even... coffee beans... and I only saw them on the

TV for the coffee commercials”. According to her, before Starbucks came to China, people bought instant coffee; “After Starbucks came to Beijing, I think more and more people have more picky taste of coffee”. Understanding this from a diffusion of innovation perspective, Starbucks as the first high-profile entrant in the market has to orchestrate the diffusion of the coffee experience through the market place by encouraging the adoption of this innovation (Rogers, 1995). This entails introducing the coffee experience to the consumer, educating them, and coaxing them to embrace it through generating interest and trial. The response of our informants, as illustrated by these comments from Sharon, suggests that this is a difficult task. “Some people do not drink coffee very much, (or they) do no drink coffee at all, (some people) do not like coffee” or even more extreme, “Coffee are from the UFO, from out(er) space” which is prompted by the image of an unusually shaped coffee machine that reportedly looms to the ceiling. In addition, Starbucks is more than coffee; it is an upscale and sophisticated coffee experience with a wholly new and confusing coffee vocabulary. As Hudson put it, “They use strange words...‘cappuccino’, we never heard of before we go to Starbucks... ‘cappuccino’ even more than coffee...this is different”. He goes on to say:

I took this (picture) because I don’t know what this is suppose... the first time I come to Starbucks, I don’t know what this was for (pointing to the sugars, stirrers, and milk). I want to use this but I don’t know if this simple for me to use, to the coffee. And indeed I like to come to Starbucks, I like the environment and atmosphere, but I don’t like the coffee very much here because I think this is a cultural, you need to try to explain this culture to me more in detail, but they don’t do this. We came to, they ask what it wants and from the board (menu board), we choose one and they give us, they don’t know what we should do with this and with the sugar or milk or other things. We don’t know, I am afraid is this right with the sugar? but let me think, no this don’t need sugar, you just drink it, but I will add the sugar, I think this is unsuitable. This hot water for me to come to Starbucks, but I come to Starbucks- so I took this picture ...

The quote reveals bewilderment and frustration with the initial experiences of being in Starbucks right from the point that the order was placed. Having wrestled with the nomenclature and made his choice, Hudson had no personal script for what to do next because such a script is embedded in the processes and practices of the store and is acquired over time through experience. So, having picked up his drink, he did

not know what to do with it. Should he add sugar or milk? Or, should he just drink it as it is? He is also confused about the accoutrements like stirrers that are part and parcel of making the coffee. For Hudson, ordering and consuming a cup of coffee has become fraught with uncertainty and confusion that has left him very frustrated- a feeling he likens to being in “hot water”. From the diffusion of innovation perspective, not only is the high-end coffee experience new, but in addition it is perceived as incompatible with the tea drinking traditional culture, with the result that consumers have to invest in understanding and appreciating it. This investment of time and energy and the risk that it may not be worth the cost is a barrier to the adoption of the innovation. And, this despite the fact that it is consumed in an observable, public setting which should facilitate its adoption.

Hudson faults Starbucks for not recognizing that they need to initiate their consumers into the coffee drinking culture by educating them about coffee and guiding them through the steps of making a cup of coffee. So does Dawn, who suggests that Starbucks needs to have a help desk where customers can “watch what to do” and get ‘some advice’. She goes on to say:

I remember when I first go to Starbucks, I wanted an ice coffee but I think I have really added sugar, I choose one and added my coffee, but after my drinking over my coffee, the sugar is staying at the bottom of the cup. I don't know because many, many kinds of sugar in there, so I don't know what kind of sugar is the fit for me, for my coffee. So I want to Starbucks, in the future, Starbucks will have some service and teach me what kind of sugar added to what kind of coffee.

Jackie got this help from her American friends “who can tell the difference between different kinds of coffee beans”, and who took her to Starbucks and introduced her to the coffee drinks. Now she knows the script as revealed in this quote: “(I took this picture because) I wanted to show that how you would get your coffee there, and you pay for your money here, and waitress and waiters who wear the uniforms will serve ...you with a smile, and after you pay ...money, you should walk this way, and to get your drinks here”. Here her American friends played the role of tutors or preceptors not only initiating her into coffee but also helping her with the vocabulary and with navigating the routines so that she is at ease with the process.

The role of elements of the built environment as exotic

In addition to the coffee and coffee ordering and consumption experience, many decor elements, like the fireplace, table decorations, and paintings are also found to be new and unusual. Sharon took a photograph of a table decoration which she describes as very interesting but she does not know what it is. Cindy echoes this comment in describing some decoration on the big column that is blue and “looks like the bottom of the sea” but she is not sure. A number of informants singled out a mural of sorts on a wall – it was covered with words on a background of swirls and other abstract figures. Illustrative is this comment from Hudson:

I take this picture because it involved on the wall of Starbucks. I found many words on the wall. Every time I come in here, I watch them, I read them, I am clever, I have read them through. Every time I will read them, but never I had understand what they said. A piece of them....and this is what is talking about a story, maybe about Starbucks and the coffee and why is the coffee brown, maybe because ?? and now I read them too, but this is, I think this is the mysterious just like we are in a very unfamiliar place and it just we cannot see. I feel like a little bit nervous about where we are now. Just like in a room, we cannot go out, like mysterious....and I will come and look at it but I never understand what it is. This attract me.

Here Hudson reveals a classic approach-avoid conflict (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). On the one hand the words on the wall provoke his curiosity: he wants to examine them and understand what they mean. He reports that he reads them every time he comes to Starbucks. But, this Graduate of one of the more prestigious universities in Beijing does not think he understands what they mean: he does not know if it is story or not, and if it is a story, what it is about. This leaves him feeling confused and anxious- feelings he likens to being in trapped a room with no exit. He is not confident that he will ever understand them, but seems to take them on as a challenge which he relishes engaging in. His experience reveals that from the consumer’s point of view, transforming a servicescape into a consumptionscape can be a conflicted process, fraught with anxiety and threatening to self confidence, yet at the same time attractive.

Starbucks as a Bridge between Cultures

For our informants, the Starbucks experience is an “American” experience. As Cindy put it, “Starbucks is American coffee shop”, Hudson calls it an “American style place”, and Sharon says, “People know...it is an American restaurant”. For Jackie, whose American friends have taken her to Starbucks and tutored her on the differences between different kinds of coffee beans, Starbucks has been a “kind of a window to show American culture”. This perception of Starbucks as “American” is noteworthy because the format of Starbucks was inspired by Italian espresso bars and the plan was to “recreate the Italian coffee bar culture in the United States” (Koehn, 2001) and later export it across the globe. This makes Starbucks, on the surface of it, an ideal candidate for the label “trans-national corporation”, where trans-nationalism describes a condition in which people, commodities, and ideas transgress or cross national boundaries and are not identified with a single place of origin (Featherstone, 1990). However, we found in fact that for our informants, Starbucks has a distinct identity associated with the United States and reflected in terms of lifestyles, decor, and business practices. According to Dawn, “Starbucks symbolizes U.S. and its culture. I like it. I think it is a special place...I know the Starbucks name is from a hero, a multi-hero. Starbucks symbolize American hero, is right?...In American people’s heart.”

For our informants, Starbucks represents a bridge between two cultures – U.S. and Chinese – as revealed in this quote from Sharon, “This picture shows two kinds of cultures mixed together in one place, in one restaurant, in one coffee shop, you can...if I sit here I can see many, many things of America, of China and other things”. In addition to the mixing together of “things” of the U.S. and China, informants mentioned the connection in Starbucks between people of different nationalities. Both Dawn and Hudson notice a “foreign” guy talking to a Chinese person and Hudson comments, “Starbucks is a good place for people to communicate, to exchange their ideas, especially for the Chinese and friends”. Jackie too mentions, “I also wanted to take a picture of a foreigner and a Chinese... sat at the same table and I think it’s also work for them -- that connection of different countries. Some customers

they are foreigners and of course, foreigners go there together, but sometimes they are together with their Chinese friends”.

Informants conjecture that Starbucks replicates this strategy across the world. Pointing to the round green Starbucks logo on the window, Jackie says, “It has Chinese characters in it because it is Starbucks in Beijing...I just imagine that if there is a Starbucks in Spain -- I think there is -- I think they must have that green with Starbucks in Spanish... I can feel that Starbucks want to make you feel at home, and also make you feel that connection of those two countries, of, I mean, America and those country you live in”.

The role of elements of the built environment in building bridges

Elements of the built environment play a key role in the identification of Starbucks as a bridge between the U.S. and Chinese cultures. The decor is very different from Chinese restaurants, especially in terms of the images and pictures hanging on the walls; Chinese restaurants display a few non-unique images that are of “some sayings” and show “some great people”. In contrast the Starbucks is colorful: blue, yellow and white colors stand out as internal design elements; the walls are covered with images, pictures, words and stories; and they interpret this as undoubtedly “American”.

The Chinese consumers are also cognizant of a number of different Chinese artifacts and elements in Starbucks. Sharon points to a traditional Chinese chair and an antique Chinese cabinet that she thinks one would find in a rich man’s home. Cora notices a trash receptacle made of bamboo that is “so traditional in China...if you see bamboo...you will...you can think -- Oh, it’s China!” Sharon picks out a kettle in the shape of a traditional Chinese animal; she is not sure what it is: “It’s like dragon. It looks like dragon, but it’s not a dragon.... I think it’s an old animal in China. I don’t know what”. Jackie highlights the coffee cups for sale with the word “Beijing” on them.

Our informants see this placement of the Chinese elements as intentional, as revealed in this quote from Sharon who is struck by the fact that Starbucks, who can spend a great deal of money on

decor and furnishing and get anything they want, chooses traditional Chinese furniture “to show their customers...we are in China...we are in China...we are in Beijing”. They see several different motivations for Starbucks wanting to make this connection. For some informants it is simply a very smart business strategy for a company that is expanding globally:

Hudson: Starbucks is from American, but (they) provide this Chinese style.... This is Chinese...

Dawn: Chinese furniture.

Hudson: Old style.

Dawn: Very special.

Hudson: They have...it presents the Chinese, because now this Starbucks is in China so they ... Chinese special culture in Starbucks and so it represents that Starbucks is international, multi-international company.

For others, the mixing of the two cultures is a sign of friendship and respect. Referring to the furniture made of bamboo in her photo, Jackie says that it creates the feeling that people from the U.S. know what the Chinese like and that they “respect us”. “They come to China as a kind of respect to our country because we know that China is now a developing country. It’s developing, and we feel thankful for those foreigners who have an interest in China...we feel that respect in Starbucks with those chairs and tables.”

DISCUSSION

From Servicescape to Consumptionscape

It is striking that our informants do not patronize Starbucks for its coffee; in fact they tend not to like it, do not drink it, and are quite uncertain about what to do with it. Coffee is incidental to the drama that is unfolding in Starbucks. This echoes the observation made by Yan about McDonald’s in Beijing, “Although people have reservations about the food at McDonald’s (it is not filling), they are still keen to go there. Why? Most informants said that they liked the atmosphere of the restaurant, the style of eating, and the experience of being there. In other words, the attraction of McDonald’s is not that it offers fulfilling food but “fulfilling experience” (1997; pp. 47). At Starbucks, New China consumers move

beyond the novel experience of Western ways, morals, and styles to a more compelling, personal experience built with and from the servicescape as expressed in this quote from Hudson:

I have to describe my feeling in this picture because I think this is open office. I like this environment, working environment, and coffee ... is unique, in the computer, and it's vibrant and I like this. I think this is my life. I think this is the most attractive thing that Starbucks has for me.

Hudson has emotional ties to Starbucks and he is using the commercial servicescape as a means of self-definition as he gets work done in an open, energetic environment. This is how he wants to structure his life. This finding is consistent with recent research recognizing peoples' strong emotional ties to a wide range of settings, and how these relationships are consciously constructed by people to shape their lives (Manzo, 2003). Reflecting on the relationship of places to the creation of the self, Manzo argues that people choose places that are congruent with self-concept, and in this way places become meaningful partners in the process of identity creation, especially in times of transition. "Places become meaningful as transitional markers or symbols of critical life events, such as a benchmark in a significant relationship (either positive or negative), as well as in simpler moments of reflection. These places are consciously valued as deeply meaningful" (Manzo, 2003, pp. 53).

In the theme of "Starbucks as home" we find that our informants value Starbucks as a haven: a place of security, re-generation, and warmth- all feelings that are deeply associated with a home, a place of dwelling, or a place of origin. To enter Starbucks is to leave the chaos of the world outside and find a "peaceful place". This is consistent with research on the meaning of home that has recognized that home is a personal, emotion laden construct and can be attached to places other than a house (Manzo, 2003; Sommerville, 1997). However, it is quite an unexpected finding in the stream of research that has examined the role of commercial, business places in people's lives (Oldenburg, 1989). The research, which is primarily based on studies within the U.S. has found that places like Starbucks are "third" places or places between home and work that find meaning in people's lives as informal social gathering places or local and inclusive community centers. "Third place" is also how the brand has been positioned by the company (Schmitt, 2003) and it can be argued that this resonates with North Americans who by moving

out of inner cities into the suburbs have become shut off in their homes and lost those social institutions like post offices and drug stores that offered people the chance for informal chats and gatherings.

By comparison, most urban Chinese live or aspire to live in two or three-room apartments averaging 400-800 square feet in high-rise, high density apartment buildings situated in mega metropolises of millions of people (Intel, 2005). For them places like Starbucks offer a haven: a place where they can shut off the chaos and confusion of the outside and find comfort, warmth, and opportunities for backstage behavior. This is revealed in the theme of “Starbucks as a constellation of personal worlds”, which is linked to the theme of home by the feeling of privacy but is distinct from it in so far as “home” is about refuge, and “personal space” offers the ability to do one’s own thing. Patrons at Starbucks feel free to do as they choose, whether it is to study privately or work with a colleague outside the office or romance a special friend. This is important to them as they compose identities as young professional people in charge of their own lives in a new millennium of China facing outward, not inward. This interpretation of a focus on self-identity is consistent with the Gallup poll finding that in the ten years between 1994 and 2004 the number of Chinese that responded in favor of “...live a life to suit my own tastes” rose from ten to twenty-six percent of the population, a trend they interpreted as signaling the rise of the “me” generation, an about face for traditionally communal China (McEwen et al, 2006).

The narrative of Starbucks as a home and a place where people can do their own thing is a compelling narrative, but incomplete. What is a haven and a comfort is also “hot water” and mysterious. In the theme “Starbucks as exotic”, we find that Starbucks challenges and confuses our informants. They report that they do not like the taste of the coffee itself, understand the coffee vocabulary; or have the scripts for negotiating their way through the store. In addition to the coffee, they find design elements like the decoration on the wall unintelligible yet fascinating. Like a home it is known and knowable, but simultaneously its processes and practices are new and different and not intuitive. It can become the site attached to a very special personal moment and yet make the same person feel incompetent. This suggests that the experience is a complicated, multilayered consumption experience that can be both relaxing and

taxing for consumers. Contradictory meanings of home and hot water; comfort and discomfort; known and different; “special” place and threatening place are attached to it and seem to exist simultaneously side-by-side.

This echoes the findings of Mick and Fournier (1998) who report that the adoption of new technology products is laden with paradoxes like connection and disconnection, competence and incompetence. In this paper we show that paradoxical responses are not restricted to new technology products, but consistent with Kozinets et al. (2004) can pervade new consumption experiences, specifically the incorporation of complicated or complex new services and experiences, a fact that has not as yet been widely recognized in the adoption of innovation literature. In the culture literature, our findings support and extend those of Eckhardt and Houston (2002) who find that McDonald’s has a contradictory impact on the culture in China. When families eat together at a McDonald’s it becomes an instrument to uphold and sustain traditional values, but yet when young people go on unchaperoned dates there, it is used as a place to challenge traditional practices. In this paper we show that the paradoxical impact extends to the individual level when people can experience Starbucks as secure, warm, and comfortable as in the “Home” theme; and threatening, frustrating, and strange in the “Exotic” theme. One can speculate that for members of the New China the paradox of Starbucks parallels the tension between the excitement of constructing new identities as modern, western-looking professionals and the traditional pull of maintaining their role as dutiful, Chinese family members. Just as Starbucks is seen as a bridge between the two cultures of the United States and China, so also it is a setting where the consumers can be themselves playing out new roles and identities, without serious threat to existing roles. In this way their perception of Starbucks as a place where cultures “mix together” and communicate respectfully and with ease, is also a personal metaphor.

The Role of Elements of the Built Environment

We confirm research on consumer-place relationships and extend it to a context where the built environment is foreign to the culture. Categorizing the constructed environment of the Beijing Starbucks

into ambient conditions (e.g. lighting and temperature), design factors (e.g. layout and decor), and social interactions amongst and between customers and employees, we find that design factors are engaged by consumers in significant ways. Consider the emergence of Starbucks as home, two décor elements: the fireplace and sofa feature very prominently in triggering the comfort and warmth of home. Starbucks becomes a “constellation of personal spaces”, when informants map these spaces onto different corners of the setting, including corners for “happy chat” with friends, intimate corners for dating and romancing, and quiet and calm corners for private study or relaxing. Design also becomes important when the informants attribute a prominent role to the size and number of tables and chairs in the spaces: larger tables with more chairs allow for socializing with friends, and smaller tables with two chairs are for couples. In summary, design elements like the format and layout of the setting and decor like sofas, tables, and chairs provide the resources that informants use to construct personal meanings.

The paradoxes inherent in the experience of co-opting the resources of a built environment to ones own purposes are also revealed for a number of different décor elements of the servicescape. The fireplace for example, is valued as emblematic of home, and at the same time is found to be new and different as in this comment from Shaojin “In most Chinese people homes there are no fireplace, so the fireplace is strange for Chinese people, but it’s also attractive for Chinese people”. And, the wall length display of coffee mugs, coffee packets, and other merchandise is recognized both as a source of revenue for the company, and also as a colorful and attractive décor feature (Jackie). Focusing on the antique Chinese table informants characterize the décor as distinctive and unique enough to be compared to an art gallery, yet they also note design elements that Starbucks shares with other fast food joints such as large, prominent logos on the exterior and “No Smoking” signs.

Design and décor elements also feature prominently in the perception of Starbucks as a bridge between America and China. There is no doubt that the design, décor, and ambiance of the setting cement its perception as an American place. And, it is perceived as reaching out to the Chinese because of the presence of indigenous Chinese materials, like bamboo; authentic Chinese symbols, like dragons; antique

Chinese artifacts, like a cabinet that you would find in a “rich man’s home”; Chinese characters on the cups; and Chinese style table and chairs. Informants see these elements as a deliberate strategy enacted by Starbucks to make a connection with China reasoning that the incorporation of local artifacts, designs, and styles brings legitimacy to Starbucks as a global company and viewing them as a sign of respect – they see respect in the tables and chairs. In this context the following recent statement from Howard Schultz is very noteworthy:

“Our stores there (China) are a mirror image of what you see in Madison Park and Pike Place. We learned over the years, by doing business in Asia and specifically China, that the Chinese consumer is highly aware of Western brands and has a desire to buy Western products. But they don’t want it diluted. They want the authentic experience. The only minor modifications are some taste-profile changes on food and some size issues” (Ouchi, 2005).

From this we conclude that Starbucks considers Chinese design elements in their space as undesirable because they diminish the experience of Chinese consumers who are looking for an “authentic” experience, in this case a “Western authentic experience”. They view Starbucks as an emissary from the West to China introducing Western ways and styles to the Chinese. We find, in contrast, that for our informants Starbucks is a bridge between two cultures: a place where they can communicate and mingle and find common ground. It is also striking that they conjecture that in another country, such as Spain, Starbucks must include Spanish design elements indicating that Starbucks demonstrates its respect for a country it enters through gestures of friendship.

LIMITATIONS

Enthusiasm for what we have learned must be tempered by consideration of design and other method factors that may have influenced our findings. Take for example the effect of reimbursing the informants for the money spent at the Starbucks. It could have induced the informants to go there in the first place (when they are not naturally inclined to) or to buy products that they would not buy on their own volition or to pay more attention to the task than they might have otherwise (thereby offering a competing explanation to photography for informants' enthusiasm). We are sanguine that we did not bribe

the consumers to visit Starbucks because the interviews revealed that they had been before and they had no objection to going back again; in fact they volunteered. As for the impact on purchasing behavior, we found many instances where informants bought the products they liked and avoided those they did not (coffee in some instances, cakes in another) indicating that reimbursement did not distort purchasing behavior. Reimbursement however may have had some effect on engagement; it is hard to quantify how much and separate its effect from other sources of engagement and enthusiasm.

Then there is the question of whether photographing the experience distorted the experience itself, since people do not in the natural course of life take pictures of themselves doing things. There is little doubt that photographing a personal experience heightens the sense of engagement manifested in the attention the informants paid to making sure that they reported on the many facets of their Starbucks visit. However, debriefing interviews produced no evidence that photographing the experience distorted behaviors in other ways.

In designing research projects trade-offs have to be made. Our options were to collect data in the native language (which we did not speak or understand) and use interpreters and translators to access the data, or to do the interviews ourselves in our own native language, not that of the informants. We thought that our research endeavor would be better served if we could get as close to the informants as possible, and this meant conducting the interviews ourselves aided by the photographs. We believe that this method was effective for our project, but it may not be feasible or necessary for researchers with much larger samples and bigger budgets.

CONCLUSION

Research on the impact of the built environments on consumption behavior has demonstrated that place shapes behavior in so far as the theme of the servicescape, the format of the setting, and ambient elements provide the frame that attempts to channel consumers' experiences in certain trajectories (Sherry, 1998). Further, this body of work also acknowledges that the impact of place on behavior is not deterministic since people can actively bend places to their own purposes (Aubert-Gamet, 1997; Sherry,

1998). This is echoed in the globalization literature which finds that while global brands can impact local cultures; these markets are not passive but actively interpret and deliberately appropriate the meanings of global brands to their own cultural milieu (Ger and Belk, 1996). In this paper we show how one particular local market, the young, urban, upwardly mobile Chinese, “twist” the resources of an iconic global servicescape for the production of new life experiences, roles, and identities. By focusing on the New China market and Starbucks, we add to the growing body of scholarly work both on the brand (Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Thompson et al., 2006) and a market segment which is of tremendous economic significance to the Chinese and world economy (Kilby and Carter, 2006; McEwen et al., 2006). From a substantive research point of view we show how these consumers, who are in a liminal stage of life, purposefully use features of built environments like layout and furniture to create experiences and weave them into narratives that are personally meaningful thereby transforming the sterile built environment of a servicescape into a consumptionscape.

Understandings that most urban Chinese live and work in “crowded” spaces with very few opportunities for backstage behavior we discover that they use the resources of the servicescape to imbue the setting of a commercial enterprise with “Home” like qualities. We also discover that this process of creating personally significant meanings is not always smooth but can be fraught with tension and anxiety. This is especially the case when the experience is new, with the result that the “twisting” of the resources of a servicescape can be a paradoxical experience creating both “home” and “hot water”. Here we extend findings of paradoxical impact from the new technology adoption literature to the globalization context. We speculate that just as Starbucks is a “mixing” place for two different cultures, so also it is a bridge between the modern, western-looking professional identity and traditional dutiful familial roles.

The use of the qualitative research methodology of photo-elicitation was crucial to this research. We were able to collect data in a timely fashion, relatively inexpensively, and at the same time our interviews were very productive, both in the range of emotions we tapped into and in the volume of comments, especially for the Chinese setting (Eckhardt, 2004). This methodology is relatively new to

International Business field and we hope that our paper will encourage other scholars in the area to investigate it. We believe the method has potential for adoption in business disciplines interested in studying the dynamics of process issues within and between groups of stakeholders. For example, photoelicitation could be used to study discussions in annual stockholders and board meetings to understand differences in governance processes. Moreover, organizational behavior presents unlimited opportunities with regard to design and use of the workplace, negotiations, inter-functional coordination, as well as how genders collaborate in different countries. Photoelicitation could also provide a fresh view of organizational brainstorming sessions. Closer to our own context, research in the future could examine the transformation of a servicescape into a consumptionscape from the point of view of both parties in this process: viz., brand managers and consumers, who in essence co-create this experience. The idea would be to determine, through in-depth interviews with both managers and consumers independently, managers' intent in designing environments and consumers' experience of consuming it.

REFERENCES

- Arnould, E. and Price, L. (1993) 'River magic: Extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(June): 24-45.
- Arnould, R., Price L., and Tierney, P. (1998) 'Communicative Staging of the Wilderness Servicescape', in G. Hogg and M.Gabbott (eds.) *Services Industries Marketing: New Approaches*, Routledge Press: New York, New York, pp. 90-115.
- Arnould, E. and Thompson, C. (2005) 'Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(March): 868-882.
- Aubert-Gamet, V. (1997) 'Twisting Servicescapes: Diversion of the physical environment in the re-appropriation process', *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 8(1): 26-41.
- Baker, J. (1987) 'The Role of the Environment in Marketing Services: The Consumer Perspective', in J. Czepiel, C. Congram, and J. Shanahan (eds.), *The Services Challenge: Integrating for Competitive Advantage*, Chicago: American Marketing Association, 79-84.
- Bitner, M. (1992) 'Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees', *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2):57-71.
- Caru, A. and Cova, B. (2003) 'Revisiting consumption experience: A more humble but complete view of the concept', *Marketing Theory*, 3(2):267-86.
- Clark-Ibanez, M. (2004) 'Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(12):1507-27.
- Collier, J. (1967) *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston: Austin, Texas.
- Collier, J. and Collier, M. (1986) *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, University of Mexico Press: Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- Coulter, R. Zaltman, G., and Coulter K (2001) 'Interpreting consumer perceptions of advertising: An application of the Zaltman metaphor elicitation technique', *Journal of Advertising*, XXX (Winter):2-21.

- Deighton, J. (1992) 'The consumption of performance', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(December):362-372.
- Eckhardt, G. (2004) 'The Role of Culture in Conducting Trustworthy and Credible Qualitative Business Research in China', in C.Welch and R. Piekkari (eds.) *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for International Business*, Edward Elgar Cheltenham UK, pp. 402-420.
- Eckhardt, G. and Houston M. (1998) 'Consumption as Self Presentation in a Collectivist Society', in K.Hung and K. Monroe (eds.) *Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research*, Association for Consumer Research: Provo, Utah, (3)52-58.
- Eckhardt, G. and Houston, M. (2002) 'Cultural paradoxes reflected in brand meaning: McDonald's in Shanghai, China', *Journal of International Marketing*, 10(2): 68-83.
- Featherstone, M. (1990), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization, and Modernity*, Sage: London, UK.
- Ger, G. and Belk, R. (1996) 'I'd like to buy the world a Coke: Consumptionscapes of the less affluent world', *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 19(September): 271-304.
- Heisley, D. and Levy, S. (1991) 'Autodriving: A photoelicitation technique', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18: 257-67.
- Hightower, R., Brady, M. and Baker, T. (2002) 'Investigating the role of the physical environment in hedonic service consumption: An exploratory study of sporting events', *Journal of Business Research*, 55(September):697-707.
- Intel (2005) 'Insights from Inside Asia', [www document]
http://www.intel.com/research/exploratory/papr/inside_asia.htm (accessed 23 March 2007).
- Kilby, N. and Carter, P. (2006) 'Emerging onto the world stage', *Marketing Week*, 29(5):30-31.
- Koehn, N. (2001) *Brand New: How Entrepreneurs Earned Consumers' Trust from Wedgwood to Dell*, Harvard Business School Press: Boston, Massachusetts.
- Kotler, P. (1973) 'Atmospherics as a marketing tool', *Journal of Retailing*, 49(4): 48-64.

- Kozinets, R., Sherry, J., Storm, D., Duhachek, A., Nuttavuthisit, K., Deberry-Spence, B. (2004), 'Ludic agency and retail spectacle', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(December): 658-672.
- Mallett, S. (2004) 'Understanding home: A critical review of the literature', *The Editorial Board of The Sociological Review*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd: Oxford, UK, pp. 62-89.
- Manzo, Lynne (2003) 'Beyond house and haven: Toward a revisioning of the emotional relationships with places', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 23: 47-61.
- McEwen, W., Fang, G., Zhang, C. and Burkholder, R. (2006) 'Inside the mind of the Chinese consumer', *Harvard Business Review*, 84(3): 68-76.
- Mehrabian, Albert and Russell, James A. (1974) *An Approach to Environmental Psychology*, MIT Free Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Mick, D. and Fournier, S. (1998) 'Paradoxes of technology: Consumer cognizance, emotions, and coping strategies', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(September):123-143.
- Miller, D. (1998) 'Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink from Trinidad, in D. Miller (ed.) *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, Illinois, pp. 169-188.
- Oldenburg, R.(1989) *The Great Good Place*, Marlowe and Company: New York:, New York.
- Ouchi, M. (2005) 'Starbucks in China: Q&A with Chairman Howard Schultz', *Seattle Times* (October 9) from Knight Ridder/ Tribune Business News online, through Lexis-Nexis.
- Pine, B. and Gilmore, J. (1999) *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage: Goods and Services are No Longer Enough*, Harvard Business School Press: Boston, MA
- Ritzer, G. (1973) *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*, Pine Forge Press: Thousands Oak, California.
- Rogers, E. (1995) *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fourth Edition, The Free Press: New York, New York.
- Samuels, J. (2004) 'Breaking the ethnographer's frames: Reflections on the use of photo elicitation in understanding Sri Lankan monastic culture', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47(12): 1528-50.
- Schmitt, B. (2003) *Customer Experience Management*, John Wiley and Sons: Hoboken, New Jersey:

- Sherry, J. (1998) *Servicescapes: The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets*, NTC Business Books: Chicago, Illinois.
- Sommerville, P. (1997) 'The social construction of home', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 14(3): 226-245.
- Spiggle, S. (1994) 'Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21: 491-503.
- Thompson, C. (1997) 'Interpreting consumers: A hermeneutical framework for deriving marketing insights from the texts of consumers' consumption stories', *Journal of Marketing Research*, XXXIV (November): 438-55.
- Thompson, C. and Arsel, Z. (2004) 'The Starbucks brandscape and consumers' (anticorporate) experiences of glocalization', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(December): 631-642.
- Thompson, C. Rindfleisch, A. and Arsel, Z. (2006) 'Emotional branding and the strategic value of the doppelganger brand image', *Journal of Marketing*, 70(January):50-64.
- Turley, L.W. and Milliman, Ronald E. (2000) 'Atmospheric Effects on Shopping Behavior: A Review of the Experimental Evidence', *Journal of Business Research*, 49: 193-211.
- Watson, J. (1997) 'Transnationalism, Localization, and Fast Foods in East Asia', in J. Watson (ed.) *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, pp.1-38.
- Yan, Y. (1997) 'McDonald's in Beijing: The Localization of Americana', in J. Watson (ed.) *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in South East Asia*, Stanford University Press: Stanford, California, pp. 39-76.
- Zaltman, G. (2003) *How Customers Think: Essential Insights Into the Mind of the Market*, Harvard Business School Press: Boston, Massachusetts.
- Ziller, R. (1990) *Photographing the Self: Methods for Observing Personal Orientations*, Sage: London, UK.



This photograph taken by Sharon and Cindy shows an antique wooden cabinet, bamboo trash receptacle, and potted green plant.



This photograph taken by Dawn and Hudson depicts a group of people sitting on couches around a fireplace talking.