

**Coffee and Identity: Marketing to a University Campus**

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Coffee and Identity: Marketing to a University Campus

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## Executive Summary

Branding plays a large role in the consumers they draw in as well as the audience to which they market (Bookman, 2013). Our research took this concept and extended it to the UBC Brand of Fair Trade Coffee with the intention of marketing Fair Trade successfully to UBC students. Our research questions whether coffee is rooted in identity, and whether it is a factor that influences UBC students' desire to purchase fair trade coffee. In our study, we surveyed 102 UBC students who self-identified as coffee drinkers. In our control condition, participants chose between sleeves with a Starbucks logo, a Tim Hortons logo, or the current UBC Fair Trade logo. In the experimental condition, participants were asked to choose between the sleeves with a Starbucks logo, a Tim Hortons logo, and a newly designed Fair Trade coffee sleeve with an original 'UBC Thunderbirds' logo. We associated the students' sense of identity with the Thunderbird logo and hypothesized that this fair trade coffee brand would increase likelihood that students should choose fair trade coffee. After reviewing the results, our hypothesis was disconfirmed, as people were less likely to choose the UBC Thunderbirds sleeve in comparison to the control condition.

### Research Question and Hypothesis:

We explored the research question, whether or not coffee is rooted in identity, and if this a factor that influences UBC students' desire to purchase fair trade coffee. We hypothesized that because our target group was addressing UBC students that had a connection to the university, fair trade coffee branded with a UBC Thunderbirds logo would increase the likelihood that students would choose this brand in comparison to the current fair trade coffee sleeve sold on UBC campus.

### Methods:

#### **Participants:**

A total of 102 participants took part in the study, which consisted of 51 participants in the experimental group and 51 participants in the control group. Participants were gathered by purposive sampling due to the nature of the study. As the study was observing the identity of UBC students, participants were deliberately gathered on UBC Vancouver campus. Additionally the study pertained only to coffee drinkers; therefore prior to participating in our study, students were asked whether or not they were coffee drinkers. Within the purposive sample of UBC students, random sampling was used to divide participants into either the control group or the experimental group.

#### **Conditions:**

Two conditions were present; a control group and an experimental group. The control group took a survey consisting of images with coffee sleeves from Starbucks, Tim Hortons and the current AMS Fair Trade logo. Each image was also labeled with the brand name for clarification. The experimental group took a survey consisting of images with coffee sleeves from Starbucks, Tim Hortons and a new UBC Thunderbird logo designed by the DSM-V team. This logo had the letters "UBC" and an image of the Thunderbird. Although this sleeve did not explicitly have any wording associated with "fair trade", it was labeled as "UBC Thunderbird Fair Trade Coffee." (See Appendix 1.1).

#### **Measures:**

Two surveys were administered; one for the control group and one for the experimental group. The experimental group received the survey with the manipulation, which consisted of the AMS Fair Trade Coffee sleeve being switched out for the Thunderbird logo in order to detect if identity played a role in coffee choice. All other questions on the surveys were kept uniform for both groups in order to maintain experimental control.

We used a Google Form to record the answers of participants on multiple measures. The question we were trying to find a statistical significance was: "Which coffee brand would you prefer to purchase as of now?" After the participants answered this, we administrated multiple questions using a Likert-type scale in which participants could agree or disagree with statements. These statements included: "I like this coffee because of its taste", "The location of where I can purchase this coffee is an important deciding factor", "I choose whatever coffee is the cheapest", "Logo plays a role in the coffee I purchase", "'Fair Trade' is something that is important to my self-concept", and "How familiar are you with the term 'fair trade'. All

sample questions in addition to the scale that was used to measure responses can be found in Appendix 1.2 and Appendix 1.3.

### **Procedure:**

Our experimental researchers occupied a space in the AMS student nest in order to administer the surveys to students. Prior to being offered the survey, students were asked if they were coffee drinkers, as the survey pertained to coffee drinkers only. Additionally, as an incentive for completing the survey, students were offered a cup of free coffee upon completion. Survey data was collected from 102 students; 51 in each condition.

### **Results**

Results obtained from our control condition show that 53% of participants chose Starbucks, 25% chose Tim Hortons, and 22% chose Fair trade as their brand of preference (See Appendix 1.4). In our experimental condition, 39% chose Starbucks, 51% chose Tim Hortons, and 10% chose the UBC Thunderbirds Fair Trade coffee (See Appendix 1.5). A chi-square test of independence was performed in order to examine the relationship between the different brands of coffee chosen for each condition. The difference between the two conditions was significant ( $X^2(101) = 7.6259, p < .05$ ). People were less likely to choose the UBC Thunderbird fair trade coffee sleeve in comparison to the AMS fair trade coffee sleeve in the control condition.

### **Discussion**

The results of the study did not support the proposed hypothesis, however a statistical significance was still found. The results determined that 22% of responders in the control condition stated they prefer to purchase fair trade coffee over Starbucks & Tim Hortons, while only 10% of responders in the experimental condition said they would prefer to purchase the UBC Thunderbird fair trade coffee.

The reason for the results being the opposite of the hypothesis is unclear, however a few speculations can be made. The Starbucks, Tim Hortons, and AMS Fair trade logos are all familiar to students, while the Thunderbird logo is a recognizable but unconventional logo for coffee sleeves. Participants may have avoided selecting the UBC Thunderbird logo in the experimental condition because it does not exist in reality, and therefore is not a legitimate option in the minds of participants. Low choice of the UBC Thunderbird logo could have been a function due to the lack of familiarity.

We also looked at what other factors played a role in the choice of coffee brand. Participants who selected Starbucks or Tim Hortons were significantly more likely to report their coffee preference based on taste and location (Appendix 1.6 & Appendix 1.7). Contrastingly, participants who preferred fair trade coffee were more likely to report fair trade being important to their self-concept, in comparison to those who chose Starbucks or Tim Hortons. Furthermore, 25 subjects in the control group stated they were familiar with fair trade, and 17 subjects listed that fair trade was either important or very important to their self-concept. However only 11 subjects indicated a preference for fair trade over the other brands, which indicates a disconnect between knowledge about fair trade and coffee choice. Another point worth noting is that over 50% of subjects who preferred Starbucks or Tim Hortons coffee

agreed or strongly agreed that logo plays a role in their coffee purchasing habits, while less than 20% of subjects who preferred Fair Trade (control group) agreed or strongly agreed that logo plays a role in their coffee purchasing habits (Appendix 1.8). What these statistics suggest is that only a fraction of people informed about fair trade coffee choose to drink it, with their main reason for choice being knowledge about the benefits of fair trade. Contrastingly, subjects who prefer Tim Hortons or Starbucks base their coffee preference off logo, location, and taste.

Based on these results, it seems that the idea of fair trade is a strong selling point to a minority of people, but pales in comparison to logo and location for the majority of our sample size. Despite the unexpected results of the study, one suggestion to improve fair trade sales is to improve marketing efforts around their logo.

### Limitations

Although results show statistical significance between the two groups, there are some limitations that should be considered. Firstly, with a small sample size it is difficult to generalize our results to all UBC students. With more participants, perhaps we would obtain more conclusive data and been able to see a clear preference pattern in relation to factor based survey questions (i.e. location, cost, or importance of brand). Secondly, the wording of certain questions may have led participants to answer in a certain way. For example, “Fair-Trade is something that is important to my self-concept” may have influenced participants to respond in a way that would make them seem favorably to others, known as the Social Desirability Bias. This is perhaps why most participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, although they chose Starbucks or Tim Horton’s as their coffee preference. Lastly, the way the UBC Thunderbirds sleeve was portrayed in the survey may have confused participants or influenced their choice. This is because UBC thunderbirds are not usually associated with fair trade coffee. This type of coffee does not exist, thus participants might have felt reluctant to choose this option due to the lack of familiarity. If participants were given more information regarding this new brand, our study may have yielded different results.

### Recommendations

An important finding in our data was that 21.5% of participants are unfamiliar or very unfamiliar with the concept of fair trade. If we generalize this data to the rest of the UBC student population (which is almost 60,000), that’s almost 3,000 students who are uneducated on fair trade. People who are unfamiliar with fair trade are not going to purchase fair trade coffee, especially if there are other factors involved such as taste, cost, and location.

The findings in our study show that participants who chose fair trade coffee were more likely to select that fair trade was important to their self-concept, in comparison to those who chose Starbucks or Tim Hortons. Therefore, if consumers care about fair trade and think it is important to their self-concept, they will be more likely to purchase fair trade coffee over non-fair trade coffee. For this reason, marketing efforts on fair trade coffee should place emphasis on consumers who identify as being concerned with health and sustainability. Studies have examined how to effectively market fair trade products, and many researchers agree that it would be beneficial to raise awareness and increase promotion (Zadek, 1998). In a focus group study run by Mielants et al (2003), even people who regularly purchased fair trade products

admitted that they required promotional reminders in order to stay motivated to buy these products.

Our recommendations to improve the sales of fair trade coffee are three-fold: to educate students about fair trade, to promote it more regularly, and to focus marketing efforts on a target market of students who care about health and sustainability. One way UBC could promote fair trade in both an educational and convenient way would be through social media. Social media outlets such as Twitter and Instagram are most popular among college students (Jackson, 2015). This would be an excellent way to advertise to UBC students in a way that is relevant to them and to their daily lives. The strategy that Fair Trade currently uses is to post stories about the farmers it positively impacts, with inspirational quotes to appeal universally. People are likely to share content that is empowering.

In marketing, products will not appeal to everyone. It is important to identify a target population, and market products towards this specific group. In terms of fair trade, research has shown that consumers who care about health and sustainability are most likely to purchase fair trade products (Fair Trade, 2016). It would be beneficial for UBC to seek out students who fit this criteria and market towards them. Extra advertising should be done in buildings that advocate health and sustainability, such as the Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability, and the Land and Food Systems buildings, and towards student clubs who focus on environmental issues. Students who are apart of health and sustainability related faculties, majors, or student clubs likely care about health and sustainability, and therefore would likely care about fair trade - and that is why we think UBC should target their fair trade products to them.

References

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("Knowledge, attitude and behaviour of Belgians with respect to fair trade products. Conclusions of four focus groups"), working paper for DWTC-PODO II -project, Antwerp.

Zadek, S., Lingayah, S. and Forstater, M. (1998), *Social Labels: Tools for Ethical Trade*, New

*Economics Foundation*, Brussels.

Appendix:

**Appendix 1.1:** Our Independent variable. Images on the left were used for the control condition. Images on the right were used for the experimental condition.



Appendix 1.2: Questionnaire distributed to the Control Condition

QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
<p><b>Coffee Survey</b></p> <p>Please answer the following questions and enjoy your free coffee!</p> <p><b>Tim Hortons Coffee</b></p>  <p>...</p> <p><b>Starbucks Coffee</b></p>  <p>...</p> <p><b>Fair Trade Coffee</b></p> 	<p>I choose whatever coffee is the cheapest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Disagree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree</li></ul> <p>Logo plays a role in the coffee I purchase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Disagree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree</li></ul> <p>...</p> <p>"Fair Trade" is something that is important to my self-concept:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Agree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Disagree</li><li><input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree</li></ul>

## COFFEE AND IDENTITY: MARKETING TO A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

<p>Given the options below, which brand of coffee would you prefer to purchase as of right now?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Tim Hortons Coffee</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Starbucks Coffee</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Fair Trade Coffee</p> <p>I like this coffee brand because of its taste:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Agree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Disagree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree</p> <p>...</p> <p>The location of where I can purchase this coffee is an important deciding factor:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Agree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Disagree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree</p>	<p>I believe Starbucks Coffee is better than UBC Coffee:</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Agree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Neither Agree nor Disagree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Disagree</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree</p> <p>...</p> <p>How familiar are you with the term "Fair Trade?"</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very Familiar</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Familiar</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Unfamiliar</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very Unfamiliar</p>
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**Appendix 1.3:** Questionnaire distributed to the Experimental Condition

# COFFEE AND IDENTITY: MARKETING TO A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

## Coffee Survey

Please answer the following questions and enjoy your free coffee!

### Tim Hortons Coffee



### Starbucks Coffee



### UBC Thunderbirds Fair Trade Coffee



I choose whatever coffee is the cheapest:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Logo plays a role in the coffee I purchase:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

...

"Fair Trade" is something that is important to my self-concept:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

# COFFEE AND IDENTITY: MARKETING TO A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS

I believe Starbucks Coffee is better than UBC Coffee:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How familiar are you with the term "Fair Trade?"

- Very Familiar
- Familiar
- Unfamiliar
- Very Unfamiliar

Given the options below, which brand of coffee would you prefer to purchase as of right now?

- Tim Hortons Coffee
- Starbucks Coffee
- UBC Thunderbirds Fair Trade Coffee

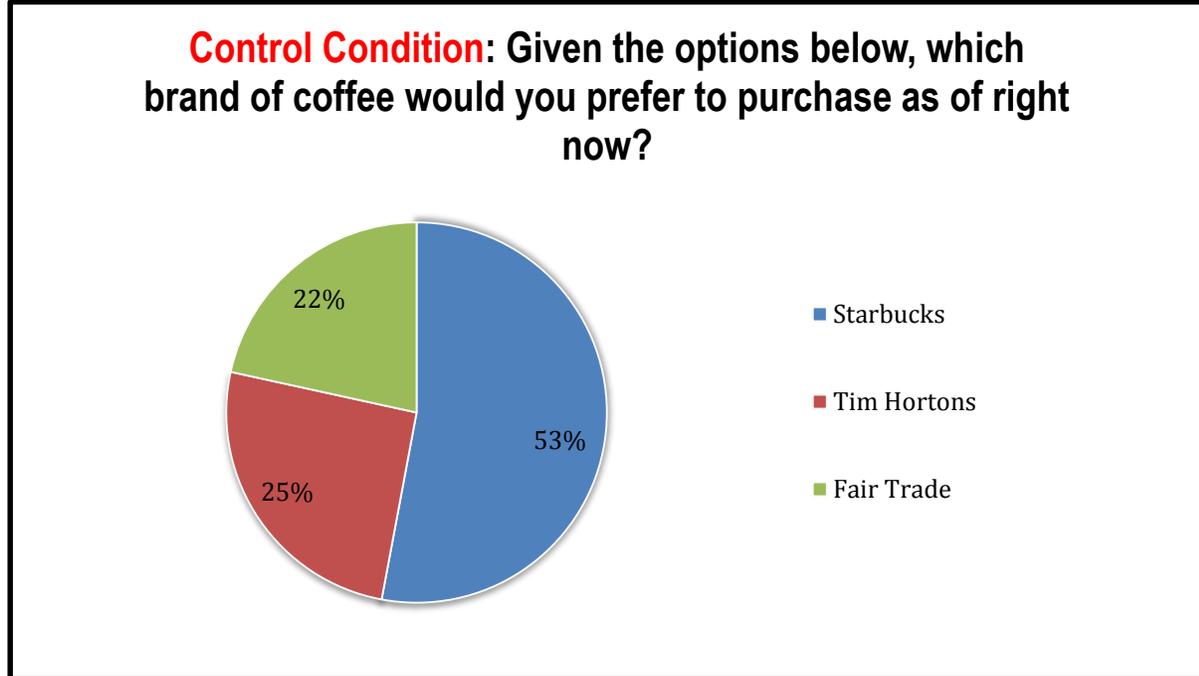
I like this coffee brand because of its taste:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

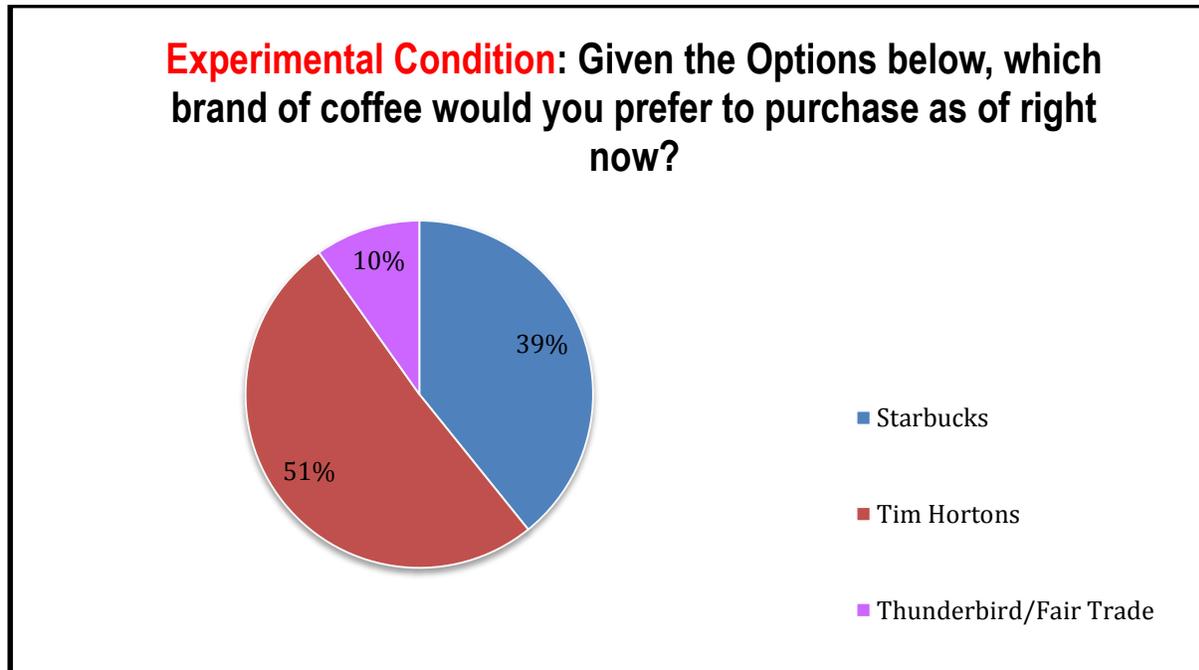
The location of where I can purchase this coffee is an important deciding

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

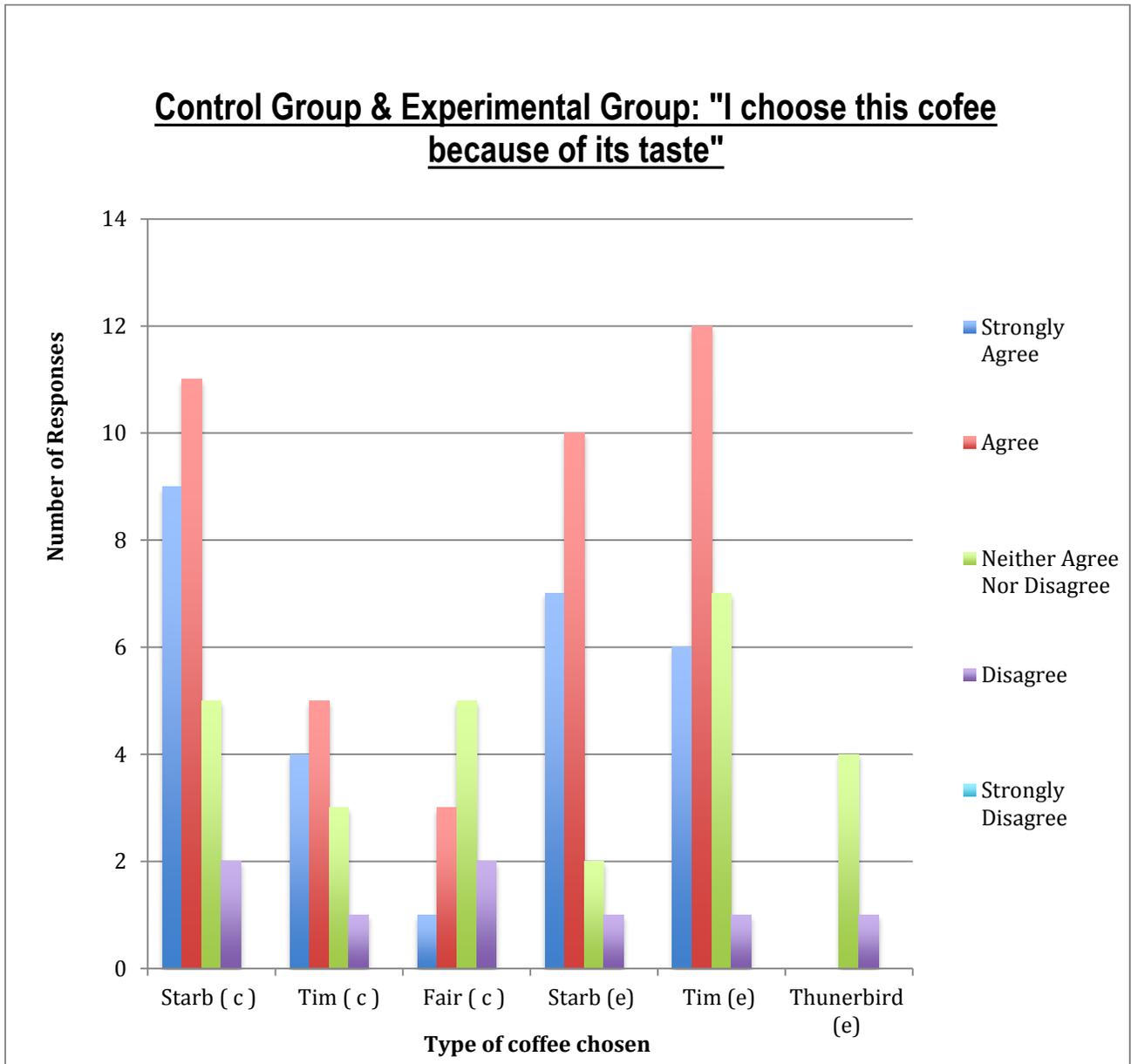
**Appendix 1.4:** Results from Control Condition



**Appendix 1.5:** Results from the Experimental Condition

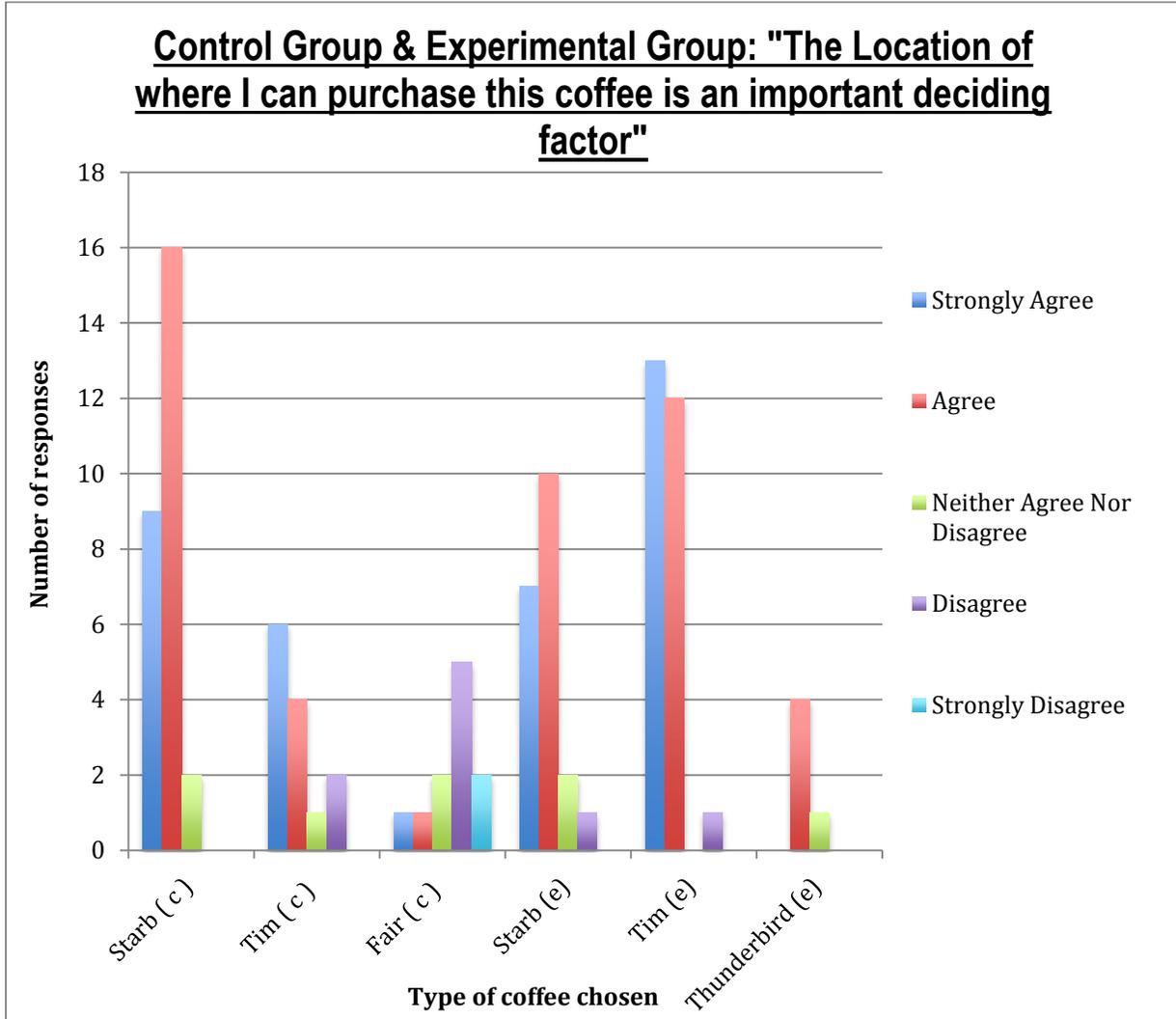


**Appendix 1.6:** Results obtained from both conditions regarding the taste



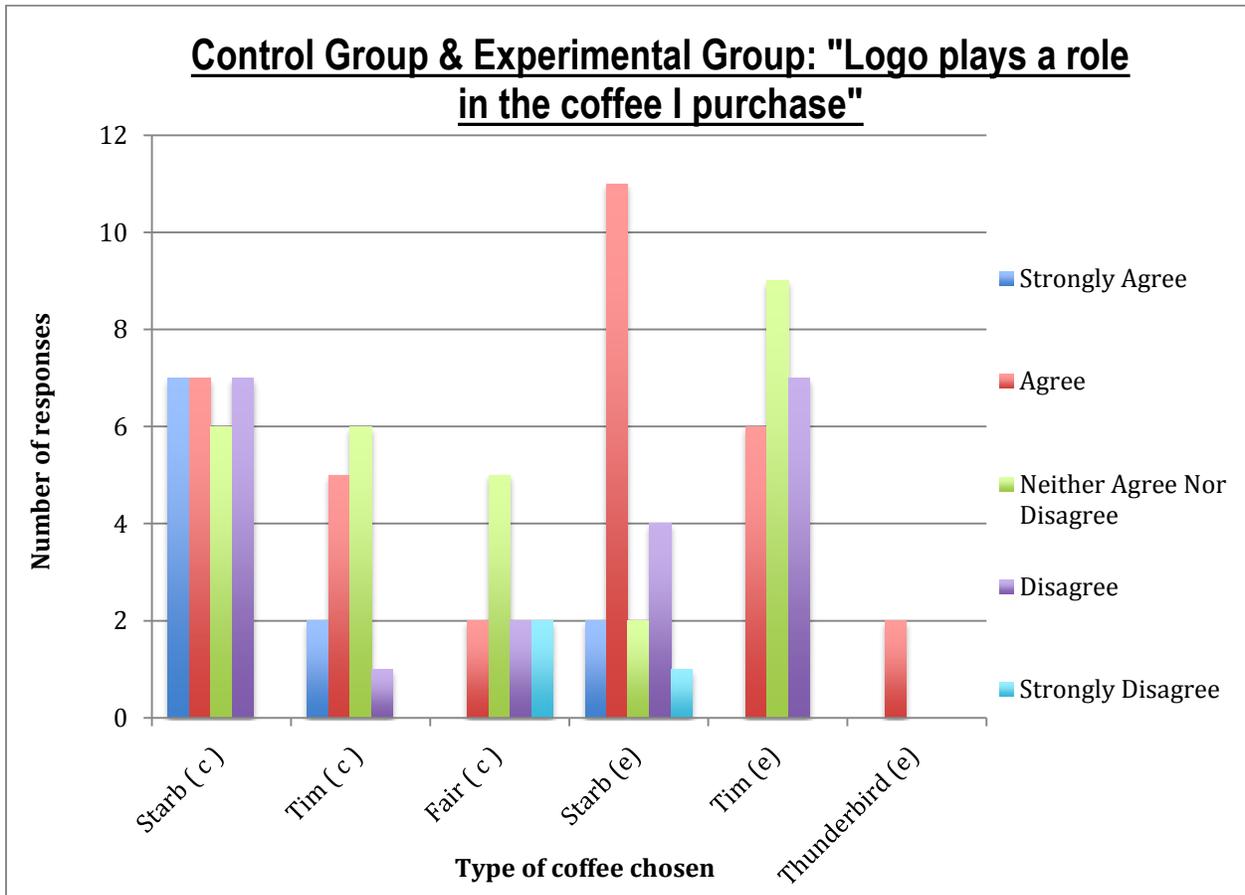
\*Note: (c) = Control condition  
(e) = Experimental Condition

**Appendix 1.7:** Results obtained from both conditions regarding the location



\*Note: (c) = Control condition  
(e) = Experimental Condition

**Appendix 1.8:** Results obtained from both conditions regarding the logo



\*Note: (c) = Control condition  
(e) = Experimental Condition

**Experience with Client:**

Unfortunately and DSM-V and our client did not see eye to eye. There was disconnect between what the client wanted us to discover through our research, and what psychology research methods actually allows us to discover. This disconnect would have been completely avoided had our client come from a psychology background. Nonetheless, it was a good learning experience.