

# Top tips from Starbucks to forming a community by creating cultural value

Starbucks' brand purpose is 'serving one cup to one neighbour at a time'. The company made it its mission to redefine what 'neighbourhood' meant to people, understanding that for most city dwellers this is no longer geographical, but is made up of a small number of disparate places that feel genuinely welcoming.



Given that the first Starbucks in South Africa opened in Rosebank recently, we asked strategic marketing consultancy Added Value to explain how they saw Starbucks creating a place and a mindset that feels like the heart of a community. Izzy Pughead of Cultural Insight, provided the international perspective while Marilyn Dutlow from Added Value in South Africa look at the local scene.

## Prioritising people over processes

Starbucks holds its employees in high regard, viewing them as the cornerstones of the community it develops; the barista the ultimate touch point. It encourages its employees to be friends, not just colleagues. It also relies on its staff members to 'bring society into the centre of Starbucks' – baristas in local stores will often write to the head office to tell them that a certain initiative is off brand.

## Making personal gestures

When Starbucks launched its 'names on cups' initiative, it tapped into the knowledge that neighbourhoods for a great number of people are not about geography, they are about intimacy. Neighbours are where people know each other's names. This small innovation was free, easy, and empowered the staff in each store to create an environment that felt truly welcoming.

In South Africa, Starbucks hasn't gone this far (yet), but certainly made sure to consider other details before its entry into Africa's second biggest economy. For example, it localised the menu to ensure that food and beverages that appeal to local consumers are available for purchase. So, you'll find familiar favourites in store and rooibos also features on the menu.

## Playing an active role in a community

The employees in each Starbucks store are encouraged to talk to people about local initiatives that matter to them, from an individual carer of a sick child, to the building of a new children's playground. The stores take on the role of community hubs, with noticeboards that advertise everything from small businesses to local campaigns. In the UK, Starbucks has worked with a connector social platform, Neighbourly, to connect with local causes. It uses social media as a way to stay connected with key issues on scale, and each member of staff pledges hours of community service to their local area.

In South Africa, Starbucks' has committed to contract with local artists and artisans to produce pieces that give a South African flavour to the stores. For the Rosebank coffee shop, each piece of wooden furniture was hand made and unique, while artwork and decor elements are also attributed to artists from South Africa.

## Creating the milestones

Starbucks has managed to create unique moments and milestones that its community can share. The release of its red cup marks the beginning of the festive period and certain drinks – Pumpkin Spice Lattes and flavoured Frappuccinos – mark the turn of the seasons. They create buzz and excitement around these landmarks both in store and online, with fans linking to hashtags and sharing pictures, bringing their wide community together in celebration.

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