



Strategic Communication Plan

Starbucks ~ Pod and Bean

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BGS 373



POD AND BEAN

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INTRODUCTION:

BACKGROUND -

In coffee shops across both the United States and Canada, a quiet crisis unfolds every day. Students hunch over laptops in crowded cafés, competing for outlets and study spaces. Freelancers and business professionals struggle with privacy and professionalism in these chaotic environments. Remote workers spend nearly \$240 a month to access workspaces that are often too loud, too distracting, and rarely deliver the focus they desperately need. In the United States alone, 68% of people struggle to focus at work, while 62% can't concentrate at home. The traditional coffeehouse has become a battleground of noise, high costs, and unfulfilled potential. Starbucks' concept of a third place has been broken, and these modern professionals are paying the price.

Starbucks views this crisis as an opportunity to strengthen its position as the leading coffee retailer. Starbucks will launch Pod and Bean in stores across Chicago, New York City, and Houston, gathering feedback during the pilot phase and adjusting the services as they roll out across corporate-owned Starbucks stores throughout the United States and Canada. The initiative is more than just an upgrade; it demonstrates Starbucks' dedication to innovation.

Pod and Bean provides customers with private, soundproof workspaces designed for maximum productivity and comfort. The acoustic pods feature noise cancellation or music control, ergonomic seating, and spacious desks. They also serve as fully equipped technology hubs with outlets, USB-A and USB-C ports, and access to a private high-speed Wi-Fi network. Users can control the environment, including temperature and lighting. The services are bookable directly through the Starbucks app in 30-minute increments for up to 4 hours, at \$5.00 per half-hour. Each session includes a complimentary hot or iced coffee or tea, making Pod and Bean an easy solution for customers seeking reliable on-demand private workspaces tailored to their needs.

RECOMMENDED APPROACH -

The key to a successful model relies on a three-pillar strategy that positions Pod and Bean as the essential evolution of the modern workspace. The campaign will inform, inspire, and mobilize three stakeholder groups: active consumers seeking productivity solutions, Starbucks employees championing service, and the media for press on the service.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT -

The communication plan will directly support Starbucks' corporate goal of being a true "third place" for all customer needs. By addressing the shortcomings of traditional coffeehouse work environments, such as high costs, distractions, unprofessionalism, and limited resources, Pod and Bean will help the company gain a competitive edge. The initiative utilizes Starbucks' existing 35 million app users, enhances customer loyalty through a personalized experience, and increases revenue without losing traditional café customers.

OBJECTIVE:

SUMMARY -

The Pod and Bean campaign aims to introduce Starbucks' innovative workspace solutions to the pilot markets, encouraging adoption among current professional clientele. The initiative directly supports Starbucks' organizational goals of strengthening customer relationships, creating new revenue-generating services, and enhancing the company's reputation in the hospitality and service industries.

Currently, the target audience mainly resides in the awareness and knowledge stages of the Hierarchy of Effects. While 35 million users already trust the brand for quality coffee experiences, workplace solutions have yet to be introduced. Through communication, the audience will progress from liking and recognizing the Pod and Bean services that meet their needs to preferring Starbucks over competitors. They will then come to believe that the service offers superior value and ultimately move into the purchase and advocacy stages, making regular bookings and recommending the service to others.

Expected outcomes will include measurable increases in engagement, pod utilization, satisfaction scores, and earned media coverage. The expectation is that customers in the pilot market will shift from viewing Starbucks merely as a retailer with chaotic settings to seeing it as an enjoyable place to boost productivity and comfort in their professional lives. Employees will support productivity and shape the experience for consumers by focusing on the users' comfort and workflow needs. Media is expected to shift the perception from skepticism about the workspaces to recognizing Starbucks' innovation and establishing the company as a definitive authority in shaping modern, productive spaces that customers desire.

SMART GOALS -

<i>Specific:</i>	Achieve 70% pod utilization rates across pilot locations within six months, with 15,000 unique users and 40% repeat customer rate.
<i>Measurable:</i>	Track through app analytics such as bookings and session duration, customer satisfaction surveys, employee training, and earned media placements.
<i>Attainability:</i>	Realistic given 35 million active app users, high demand, store locations in pilot cities, and competitive pricing compared to other alternatives.
<i>Relevant:</i>	Directly addresses an ongoing issue with cafés to shape a third-place positioning, increases the customer base and reach, ensures current customers' commitment and preference for Starbucks, and provides expansion opportunities for long-term revenue growth.
<i>Timely:</i>	After launch, pilot evaluations will take place at the 3-month and 6-month marks, and the project will expand to other locations by the 1-year mark.

WHAT, WHOM, CHANNELS, EFFECT -

<i>What:</i>	Communicate that Pod and Bean solve the productivity crisis through offering affordable, private, and equipped workspaces tailored to consumers' needs while maintaining Starbucks' existing environments and commitments.
<i>Whom:</i>	Current app users for the primary target audience, Starbucks employees for the Secondary audience supporting the innovation goals, and Media coverage for the tertiary audience supporting initial outreach and long-term success.
<i>Channels:</i>	Starbucks app notifications, social media posts on official accounts, in-store signage, employee training materials, press releases, and media coverage.
<i>Effect:</i>	Drive immediate pod bookings, establish the service as a preferred workspace solution, generate favorable media coverage, and create a model for further expansion on pilot success.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS:

BACKGROUND -

No coffeehouse settings have successfully transformed private, bookable workspaces into existing café environments. Although some tech giants, such as WeWork and Industrious, have effectively designed spaces to enhance productivity, they require monthly memberships costing hundreds of dollars. Coffee chains have historically served as informal work hubs, yet substantial gaps remain: affordable, on-demand private workspaces accessible within minutes and without commitments. Traditional coffeehouses are often seen as challenging places to work due to high costs, distractions, a lack of professionalism, and insufficient resources like reliable Wi-Fi and ample space. Further research shows that the most productive environments need a controlled noise level around 50 decibels and personalized temperature and lighting options tailored to personal preferences, all of which are impossible in open café settings.

Further research shows that cafés in South Korea are at full capacity due to the country's intense study culture. Starbucks cafés there have even issued guidelines against elaborate workstation setups because of their limited resources. Additionally, companies have examined the effectiveness of similar study spaces and conclude that ergonomic furniture, adjustable lighting, and minimal distractions greatly improve productivity and lower stress. Pod and Bean focuses on adopting these trends while avoiding the chaos seen in international markets.

The current view of Starbucks is that it is a welcoming “third place” for social interactions and connections, but it is not considered a serious spot for productivity and efficiency. The gap still exists because customers cannot see the company as a place for deep focus that requires a quiet and private setting. Pod and Bean will help make Starbucks a place where people are willing to pay a small price for a service that fits the evolving needs of productive spaces.

SWOT ANALYSIS -

<i>Strengths:</i>	Starbucks' established brand quality, 35 million active app users, mobile payments, existing real estate in pilot cities, and operational excellence ensure consistent, uniform service delivery across all locations.
<i>Weaknesses:</i>	Behavioral changes in clientele used to open seating, limited pod availability may create demand imbalance; an employee training program developed from the start; operational protocols for pod turnover and cleaning cycles remain untested.
<i>Opportunities:</i>	Remote work normalization post-COVID created demand for flexible workspaces; data showing struggles with focus at work and home settings create an addressable market; partnerships with universities/airports provide markets outside Starbucks; and gravitation toward coffeeshops for productivity despite drawbacks.
<i>Threats:</i>	Competitors may replicate the service for similar business models, negative customer experiences due to conflicts, regulatory challenges around disability compliance for accessibility, and durability and longevity of spaces.

ORGANIZATION ANALYSIS -

- **Mission Alignment:**
 - Pod and Bean fulfills Starbucks' mission of inspiring and nurturing the human spirit through each person, cup, and by providing personalized, productive spaces.
- **Values Embodiment:**
 - Craft is embodied through designing workspaces that focus on comfort, technology, and customer needs while delivering results that surpass expectations beyond the traditional coffeehouse experience. Courage is demonstrated through bold innovation and a desire for necessary change, fosters belonging by respecting individual work styles, and creates joy by enhancing customers' professional needs.
- **Promise Fulfillment:**
 - Extends the customer promise of serving quality coffee with moments of connection by tailoring individual needs and offering a complimentary drink.

AUDIENCE ANALYSIS -

- **Primary Audience:**
 - Remote workers, freelancers, and students; ranging from ages 18 to 55.
- **Demographics:**
 - Business professionals working outside the office, freelancers, hybrid/online workers needing private environments, and secondary school and postsecondary students. People with various incomes seeking affordable options that are digitally intelligent.
- **Psychographics:**

- Value efficiency, autonomy, and quality experiences. Frustrated with household and work distractions, as well as expensive alternatives to focused work environments. Loyal Starbucks customers who use cafés but want privacy and tailored services.
- Situational:
 - Known audiences with existing positive views of Starbucks are in the awareness stage of Pod and Bean. They are influenced by productivity culture and the desire to improve common issues in coffeehouses.

MESSAGING:

PESO COMMUNICATION MODEL -

<i>Paid Media:</i>	Targeted Instagram and TikTok ads in pilot cities showcasing a 15-second pod tour, sponsored content with college students with large followings, and Google search ads using keywords like “quiet workspaces” and “affordable private workspaces.”
<i>Earned Media:</i>	Press releases from business publications, such as Business Insider, and local news segments in pilot cities, as well as SEO blog content covering experiences provided and highlighting Starbucks as a solution for private and personalized workspaces.
<i>Shared Media:</i>	Content campaigns showcasing the experiences of pods across various social platforms, partnerships with universities to promote services to college students, and booths at career fairs showcasing products to potential hybrid or fully online employees.
<i>Owned Media:</i>	Starbucks app notifications to try the service and use the app as a booking and communication platform; newsletters emailed to rewards members announcing the innovation; Starbucks website press releases announcing the service and the publication of 3-month and 6-month evaluations; in-store signage at pilot locations with QR codes linking to information and how to use the pods.

FRAMING -

- Values:
 - Values of autonomy in one's work environment, dignity for the individual, personalized productivity needs, and opportunities for providing all users with accessible resources to enable success.
- Simplified Message:
 - Issues of broken productivity dynamics are conveyed through a relatable message, e.g., “You deserve a space working for your focus, not against it.”
- Credibility:
 - Starbucks’ 53-year legacy in the service and hospitality industries is demonstrated through credible testimonials from pilot program users representing targeted demographics.

- Contextual Awareness:
 - An acknowledgment of post-COVID remote work roles and mental health concerns about work-life boundaries positions Pod and Bean as an essential tool in bridging the divide.
- Hard Evidence:
 - 68% struggle to focus at work and 62% at home. Traditional coworking spaces are costly and nearly 20 times more expensive. Research on conditions that enhance concentration and pilot data showing a 70% utilization rate confirm the demand for these private spaces.

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES -

- Ethos:
 - Starbucks brand endorsements from CEO Brian Niccol, CMO Mike Brown, and Director of Innovation Sarah Johnson; targeted quotes emphasizing innovation and leadership.
- Pathos:
 - Relieving stress about low productivity, pride in satisfaction and accomplishment, and the comfort of having a space dedicated and tailored to the individual combatting frustration.
- Logos:
 - Provide rational support through statistics on focus challenges, cost comparisons with alternatives, projected utilization, and research on combating burnout and focus issues.

REDEFINING THE THIRD PLACE ENVIRONMENT -

A key element of Starbucks over the years, rooted in the groundwork laid by former CEO Howard Schultz, has been the third place concept. The third place is a welcoming space between home and work where community and connections flourish. Traditionally, the third place has been characterized by open seating, ambient energy, and communal tables that foster various interactions. Pod and Bean aims to reshape and evolve this legacy. The modern third place recognizes that connections form in many different ways; whether it's a conversation over lattes or a quiet moment of focus in personalized spaces, the third place doesn't limit connections. By integrating private pods alongside traditional seating, Starbucks redefines this space as adaptable and inclusive, serving both the professional need for solidarity and the personal need for social interaction. This evolution honors the individual needs of the company's valued customers, whether they prefer open or private spaces. Starbucks aims to remain a third place for each customer's unique sense of belonging.

PLANNING:

INFORMATIONAL -

Pod and Bean's informational strategy focuses on evidence-based content that influences knowledge and decision-making among the target audience. The message will include verified data: "Traditional home and workplace settings fail to aid focus for more than 60% of the population, while Pod and Bean

addresses these productivity issues through their soundproof and private workspaces at \$5 per 30 minutes.” The target audiences include remote workers, students, and freelancers seeking workspace alternatives. Educational content detailing the pods’ features would be published on the Starbucks website, highlighting how each feature impacts productivity and providing information on how to book the pods. Case studies of pilot locations would showcase measurable outcomes: “Chicago freelancer Megan has increased her billable hours by nearly 40% after using Pod and Bean for client calls.” Additionally, comparative analyses would be published on owned and earned media, contrasting the Pod and Bean price with alternatives ranging from \$200 to \$500 a month.

Why this works: Rational publics need proof before changing their behavior, and providing objective data removes uncertainty while building trust.

Overall Strategy Fit: The messaging guides audiences from awareness to understanding while positioning Pod and Bean as a credible solution before using emotional or motivational appeals. Without a solid factual basis, the influential storytelling and concept seem superficial compared to a more credible solution.

INFLUENTIAL -

Emotional resonance and connection drive Pod and Bean’s influential strategy by understanding shared frustrations. The message leverages moral values: “You deserve dignity in your workspace, not compromise.” The public identifies with hustle culture but also craves balance in their home and work lives, while students seek validation for their academic efforts. The narrative frames Pod and Bean as a space free of chaos. The visual of the pods speaks volumes about the chaos of traditional cafés: soft lighting, wood desks, and closed doors compared to messy workspaces, loud noises, and limited open seating. Campaigns would encourage customers to share how the pods met their productivity goals. A graduate student saying “Finished my thesis chapter in 2 hours instead of the typical 4” would generate peer validation. Additionally, experiential marketing could include a focus hour trial for influenceable individuals during the pilot stage, where potential users can experience the pods free of charge in exchange for an honest review on social media, engaging other users.

Why this works: The emotional appeal bypasses rational skepticism, and as audiences see themselves in authentic stories, the preference shifts from cognitive to affective stages.

Overall Strategy Fit: Influential messaging enhances informational credibility and transforms knowledge into resonating ideas, with steps that precede motivation to reinforce behavior.

MOTIVATIONAL -

Transforming preference into action requires reducing barriers to reinforce commitments. The message would focus on a simple directive: “Open the app. Find a nearby pod. Book your focus time.” The public would still need encouragement to turn their awareness and preferences into action. Trial opportunities would help incentivize the use of pods and alleviate financial concerns: first-time users would receive 50% off their initial booking, and dedicated slow periods, like Friday evenings, could be priced at \$2 per half-hour. The Starbucks app would serve as a communication tool through push notifications, such as

stating “Your nearest pod is available in 5 minutes.” In-store signage would encourage users with short prompts like, “Need privacy? Scan to book.” These cues would promote impulsive and spontaneous decisions, especially when customers face traditional coffeehouse frustrations. Additional notifications could be sent after the pod session ends, saying “You crushed it,” to validate the booking decision, along with surveys about the pod experience that could offer discounts for future bookings. Furthermore, partnerships with colleges and businesses would enable targeted audiences to use the pods free of charge with promotional codes and coupons.

Why this works: Motivational factors enable intent to translate into behavior as barriers are reduced. Spontaneous decisions are carried out when prior knowledge and connection with the service are established, and the risk of action is low.

Overall Strategy Fit: Motivational tactics should facilitate the transition from knowledge to action and turn informed and engaged audiences into active users whose behaviors confirm the experience and generate data for growth.

EVALUATION:

CONSUMER FEEDBACK -

Feedback collection will start immediately after the pilot’s launch. Post-session surveys will gather genuine insights and reactions from the pods, while volunteer-led focus groups will offer more detailed feedback. This input will help identify what is working well and what needs fixing before expansion, ensuring that the improvements address users’ needs rather than making assumptions.

SURVEYS AFTER USAGE IN PILOT PHASE -

- **Ease Of Use:**
 - Rating scales 1-10 evaluating booking process ease, app navigation, and pod procedures.
 - On a scale of 1-10, how easy was the entire process of booking, using, and completing the pod experience?
 - Tracking task completion success rates by how many users successfully use the pods without assistance from baristas.
 - On a scale of 1 to 5, how much help did you receive from an employee?
- **Productivity Increase:**
 - Self-reported changes in efficiency and productivity compared to alternatives.
 - How much more work were you able to accomplish compared to a typical café session?
 - Time saved or gained compared to alternative options.
 - How long would you typically have spent on a specific outcome; how long did it take in the pod?
- **Meeting Customer Expectations:**
 - Gap analysis identifying differences in expected versus actual benefits.
 - Did Pod and Bean address the issues you expected it would?

- Feature utilization showing which features contribute to satisfaction.
 - What were the top three amenities included in the pod?
 - Which amenity did you use the most?
- Satisfaction:
 - Rating scale from 1 to 10 measuring the overall experience.
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the overall experience?
 - Repeat intended usage.
 - On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you to come back and use the pod again?

EMPLOYEE INTERVIEWS -

- Operational Impact:
 - Assessment of how pod bookings impacted workflow.
 - Reasonability of cleaning protocols being manageable within turnover windows.
 - Training effectiveness determines whether baristas felt equipped to address issues or questions by users.
- Customer Interaction Observations:
 - Insights into customer confusion and common questions not covered in tutorials.
 - Demographic usage patterns and moods of customers after using the pods.
 - Evaluation of whether employees believe Pod and Bean align with the third place mission.
- Challenges and Suggestions for Improvement:
 - Identifying unexpected problems, such as demand surpassing supply, technology failures, and booking conflicts.
 - Suggested improvements to make the service easier for employees to maintain.
 - Addressing other issues that need to be resolved that are not visible to the users of the pods.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS -

- Usage/Sales:
 - Track daily, weekly, and monthly utilization rates as percentages over time slots and locations.
 - Change in sales volume measured by additional revenue from pod bookings.
 - Marketing cost per pod versus lifetime value projections from pilot phases.
- Underperformance Plan:
 - Thresholds indicating failures such as utilization rates below 50% after three months, repeat booking rates under 10%, and profit loss after marketing and maintenance costs.
 - Analysis of the cause of problems by investigating whether underperformance is due to pricing, awareness, or operational issues.
 - Pivot strategies such as promotional pricing, more targeted marketing, and pod relocation to higher volume stores.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS -

- **Feedback Implementation:**
 - Analysis of survey responses, barista interviews, focus group feedback, and identification of recurring positive and negative patterns.
 - Focusing on key issues and recurring dissatisfaction patterns.
 - Integration timelines for setting deadlines on refinements prior to a broader rollout.
- **Unexpected Circumstances:**
 - Constant monitoring for unexpected risks and opportunities, such as competitor reactions, media coverage tone, scalability issues, and emerging trends.
 - Response protocols enabling immediate adjustments and resolutions for pod complications and issues.
 - Market responses by observing which markets perform better than others.

IMPLEMENTATION OF FEEDBACK AFTER PILOT PHASE -

The pilot phase will gather valuable information before expansions. Addressing key issues will focus on the Pod and Bean service to operate in the most efficient ways for customers and create a foundation for future additions and remodeling around the plan of the pods. The quantitative data helps confirm the service's viability, while the qualitative insights will improve operational procedures, product features, and marketing strategies. After reaching the target benchmarks and incorporating pilot feedback, Starbucks will be able to proceed with a wide rollout of Pod and Bean across its corporate stores in the United States and Canada.

FUTURE PLANS AND OVERALL EXPLANATION:

EXPANSION OF PILOT -

- **Pilot Success:**
 - Quantitative goals validating strong market demand: 70% utilization rate, 15,000 users, and 40% repeat bookings.
 - Qualitative feedback confirms the solution addresses productivity issues compared to traditional coffeehouse environments, with customers reporting increased focus and satisfaction.
 - Employee interviews providing operational feedback and evaluating the effectiveness of training for managing the pods.
 - Data outcomes predicted beyond the pilot markets.
- **Phased Rollouts:**
 - Corporate store expansion following regional phase rollouts.
 - The first phase focused on high-density markets with remote work cultures, including San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, and Vancouver. Additionally, the first phase would concentrate on university towns such as Ann Arbor, Chapel Hill, Charlottesville, and Victoria.

- The second phase aims to expand into suburban areas that serve commuter and family-oriented demographics, including Fort Worth, Naperville, and Ottawa. It will also focus on key airport Starbucks locations such as Los Angeles' LAX, Chicago's ORD, and Toronto's YYZ.
- The third phase focused on expanding the service to at least one corporate-owned store in each city, assuming all pods are performing well, and demand is present at 85% of locations.
 - A timeline would help allocate resources proportionally to demand while keeping operational quality as the primary focus.
- Applied Feedback and Risk Mitigation:
 - Pilot feedback would guide expansion improvements, such as clearer instructions on pod usage, improved cleaning procedures, and marketing efforts focused on productivity results.
 - Risk strategies would include geographic success, supply and demand for pod manufacturing, and pricing models reflecting local market conditions.
 - Ongoing evaluations to ensure success after expansion, including monitoring satisfaction surveys, additional feedback, and utilization rates across various regions.

CONCLUSION -

Pod and Bean represents Starbucks' response to the growing productivity challenges faced worldwide. By recognizing gaps between modern work needs and the limitations of traditional coffeehouse environments, Pod and Bean redefines Starbucks' role in the daily lives of its clientele. Through a three-pillar communication strategy, alignment with core values, and a commitment to evolving the concept of the third place, Pod and Bean positions Starbucks as a leader and innovator of accessible, personalized, and affordable productivity spaces. The pilot phase integrates research-driven messaging, detailed understanding of the audience and organization, and a balance of informational, influential, and motivational tactics to guide customers from awareness to action.

The evaluation stage remains key to the long-term success of Pod and Bean. Using user surveys, employee insights, and both quantitative and qualitative metrics, Starbucks aims to refine operational processes, improve experiences, and confirm demand before wider corporate-wide rollouts. If the benchmarks are met during the pilot stage, phased rollouts will allow Starbucks to revolutionize the product while maintaining quality and consistency in service. Ultimately, Pod and Bean will boost customer loyalty and give Starbucks a competitive edge, all while redefining how the third place caters to both communal and individual needs.

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