



Limited-Service, Unlimited Possibilities

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Starbucks Stays True to Message with Smoking Ban

Starbucks made waves in late May when news broke that the brand would ban smoking in its outdoor seating areas and within 25 feet of its entrances. Protestors and advocates alike took to the Internet to voice their support or disapproval of the ban, which took effect June 1. But the smoking ban did not phase Gary Stibel, CEO of the New England Consulting Group, who believes this move was a long time coming.

“It is on trend; several people are moving away from smoking on their premises,” Stibel says. “Starbucks is a sensual experience. It’s not only about the taste, but also the aroma of the coffee, and candidly, people who enjoy the aroma find it difficult to walk through an outside area where they are inhaling tobacco smoke.”

Starbucks focuses on being a community-driven and environmentally conscious institution, which helps explain why the company would choose to ban smoking on its premises. Starbucks writes on its website’s Responsibility page: “It is our vision that together we will elevate our partners, customers, suppliers, and neighbors to use our scale for good. To be innovators, leaders, and contributors to ... a healthy environment so that Starbucks and everyone we touch can endure and thrive.”

“It is very consistent [with the Starbucks brand message],” Stibel says. “They’re not saying we won’t serve coffee to people who smoke; what they’re saying is, look, we would like everyone to stop. We certainly would not like anyone smoking inside or near the store. We’re looking to do everything we can to be a good community citizen.”

Some municipalities, such as New York City, had already enacted outdoor smoking bans in previous years and were not affected by the Starbucks patio and outdoor smoking ban. However, other towns have less stringent laws or a lack of smoking bans altogether. There has been some online push back from customers at Starbucks locations in these

markets, especially in the Southeast. But Stibel doesn't think this dissent among patrons will drive customers away.

"In this day and age there is almost nothing that everyone endorses. There's always going to be an element that favors something different and that's what makes this country so great," Stibel says. "The vast majority of customers and associates of Starbucks are going to be in favor of this, they're going to like it. For somebody that is a smoker and a Starbucks fan, they're going to feel like this is not for them and it isn't. It's in the interest of most people, and they're going to get that."

By Marlee Murphy
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Ozark Jim • 3 days ago

I stopped going to Star Bucks ten years ago because of the smokers. Maybe I will stop in and see if they follow through. I helped vote in a smoking ban in Fayetteville, Arkansas back in 2004. The restaurants predicted a drop off in business. Based on sales tax data their revenues did drop for a couple weeks and bounced back up above where they were before the ban.

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