I ‘ve since learned that UX research is defined by much more than technical ability. At its core is a human-centered point of view and approach to problems. I have also learned that to gain relevant experience, your title doesn’t have to be “UX Researcher”. My personal strategy is to develop experience in two areas, which I loosely labeled people and data. People experience includes anything involving deep interactions with people and understanding their needs. No matter what field you’re in, get deeply comfortable investigating humans.

To gain some people experience I started working at Starbucks. Working here has taught me a lot and here I have tried to connect a UX Design world and the Starbucks brand. The reason why Starbucks is more popular than all other coffee brands across the globe is not because their coffee tastes better. Starbucks is the brand and coffee is the product that they’re selling, but is the product alone, enough for a brand’s success? The answer is a big NO!

There are many coffee brands that are producing better quality, better tasting and even cheaper coffee than Starbucks. Some local cafés in United States offers good coffee and at a cheap price! But even then - Starbucks is popular! Why? Because if you are an international tourist, you’re more likely to visit a Starbucks in United States, than go to a local coffee shop, unless you’re up for some different experience! There are Starbucks at every 2 blocks in New York City. Tourists rarely like to try something different unless they don’t have another option! Because Starbucks is something that everybody knows, and are familiar with, Isn’t it?

**#1 Familiarity & Prior Experience**

The familiarity of a user with a website or an app really matters, and if the users are familiar with ‘like, comment and share’ buttons on social media, they will expect these features everywhere. And if a social media doesn’t provide that — it comes as a disappointment to the users.

Now, social media is selling ‘**connectivity**’ as a product, but it’s not just the product that matters to the users — they also want additional features like commenting on a post, sending messages, sharing posts and much more. Just sending/accepting a friend-request to stay connected aren’t enough!

**#2 aesthetics of Starbucks**

Starbucks, all over the world have similar kind of feel & interior. I have personally visited Starbucks in many different cities across 2 different countries. And in all these cities, apart from just some cultural references that are important to connect with your local users — I found them all to be similar. The furniture everywhere is the same! Some wooden chairs, some couches, some lounge chairs — a mix of all sorts of sitting to accommodate users with different requirements. Some come there to have coffee alone, it’s perfect to make them sit on a table with lounge-chairs, that are not putting you face to face with anyone! Some come there to work along with having coffee, it’s best to put them in a place where they find comfortable sitting with a table to keep their belongings. Some on the other hand, come with family to enjoy a meal, and it’s best to have proper dining’s like sitting for them with wooden chairs and tables.

The manager makes sure that the employees are wearing the correct uniform code and are well groomed. They take the employee uniform very seriously. For example, during covid they have made sure that their employees wear the black masks that they provide or one they choose personally.

**#3 Accessibility & Similarity**

Similarity in UX is extremely important, because any users who are on a digital device, will (most likely) not be using your product for the first time. They are already using apps like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Amazon, Google etc. and look for same or similar experience in other applications that they have on their device.

If you introduce a new feature, it’s of utmost importance that the users are given a cue about it, they are given proper functionality tour and the reason why you have introduced a new feature there. An explanation or a small tour, helps the users flatten the learning curve, as well as it makes them feel a part of the product.

Accessibility is important as well, so that users who have different requirements, or some disability — can also equally enjoy the experience! Starbucks is not for one kind of user/customer, it’s for everyone, and that’s how they market themselves.

**#4 The overall experience**

## Starbucks does not only allow people to have a coffee, pay and leave — they give an experience that is so memorable and joyful to their customers, that they always come for more. Some of the key pointers in the experience that they offer are —

**You always feel welcomed** — At Starbucks, nobody will ask you to leave *(unless it’s full or some other reason)*, even if you sit there with one cup of coffee till evening. That’s one of the most important experiences that’s shared by all customers alike.

**You can work and use the internet**— Partnered with Google, Starbucks offers free Wi-Fi to their customers, which is another big reason why people even prefer to work at Starbucks!

**You can smell the amazing coffee all day long** — This is the key feature in every outlet across the world. Every Starbucks has that amazing aroma of coffee brewing that makes everyone feel instantly good! Smell is something, you can’t see, but only experience and remember it is stored in your mind, as a memory.

**The offers**— Now this is something that not everyone might relate, but some regular users will know how Starbucks surprises their cardholders and regular users with some amazing deals and offers occasionally. I still remember I got two coffees for free in Mumbai, at a Starbucks outlet, because I had their card!

**#5 The overall experience matters more than the product**

Just like with Starbucks, even in UX Design, the overall experience matters more than the product. As a user of any application or website, you will always have more than one choice to complete an action, but you are more likely to choose the website that offers you ‘great’ experience along with the product.

**For Example:** The product is an app that allows you to compress your files. One website shows you nothing, gives you no control, and you just sit there waiting for your 10 GB file to become any smaller. While another website offers you complete analysis and data as your file is uploaded, being compressed, and allows you complete user-control where you can choose whether you want to retain the quality or not. Now, in this case, you’re more likely to take up the second choice. Because that website not only compresses your file, but also gives you control, allows you to choose and is transparent with you.

This is how, as a designer, you can make sure that your website not only offers a great product to the users, but also offers an amazing, memorable overall experience to them!

In case of Starbucks, they change you for the overall experience and not just for the cost of the material. As a barista its important part of the training to understand that it’s important to make the customer happy than how much material you are using to get the order correct.

**#6 Customer first**

The one thing I which I knew but I understood better when I worked here is Starbucks employees make sure to put their customer first. They will make you a new coffee if you have any complaints about the one previously made without any complaints. The barista has that authority give you what you want without even getting the permission form the manager. They will just ask you what you want to get fixed, and they will fix your drink on priority. I have seen customer order one coffee and they just ask for a different coffee later just because they changed their mind! And they gladly do it without any objection.