

Q Methodology and Creation of Advertising Message: An Example of Coffee

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this study is to use the Q Model (Kim, 1993) to determine consumers' overall attitudes toward a specific product, namely coffee. This model is applied to gauge consumers' attitudes and feelings and to use these data to construct the most effective advertising campaign that is. It is our goal to determine exactly what the status of our product is in the mind of the consumer. This study explores how the product is perceived and discovers precisely what the segmentation for our product really is. Finally, a creative concept for the market will be developed with these attitudes in mind.

Introduction

Q methodology deals with peoples' attitudes and perceptions that have been gained from personal experience. Q employs a systematic means of studying and understanding such experience. In 1969, *The Journal of Advertising Research* published an article titled "Cues on Q-Technique" by M.J. Schlinger. In it, the author explains three characteristics of Q methodology that make it especially useful in advertising and consumer research (Schlinger, 1969). First, Q gives insight into overall respondent attitudes toward a subject, and it takes account of a whole set of associations, feelings, opinions, notions, and cognitions that an individual may hold about a product, brand, company, advertisement,

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or campaign. Second, Q technique can classify respondents into groups or types of respondents with similar profiles. Third, Q technique is useful because it is quantitative.

Because Q methodology deals with the measurable subjectivity of the individual, it is possible to measure subjective attitudinal structures. It studies attitudes by beginning with the individual's unique way of looking at a given issue—through his own eyes and filtered through his own apperceptive mass (Stephenson, 1953).

Subjectivity means nothing more than a person's communication of his point of view (McKeown and Thomas, 1988). Q methodology operates within the "internal" frame of reference in the thoroughly empirical sense of "subjective communicability" (Stephenson, 1968) of the world as it is experienced from "my own point of view" (Brown, 1986), and it is at issue anytime an individual remarks, "It seems to me" ... or "In my opinion".

The aim of this paper is to further explore the utility of Q as a means of understanding the subjective elements of consumer choice. In broad, theoretical terms, the purpose can be conceptualized in terms of the "Q Model" in advertising (Kim, 1993). As indicated in Figure 1, this model differentiates between those elements in the marketing equation that serve as "givens" to the use of Q and those whose values Q is able to calibrate.

Market Situation

Coffee means many things to many different people. Some people drink it in the morning to wake up. Some drink it only in social situations. Others only drink coffee after dinner. And some people refuse to drink it at all.

Although coffee sales are expanding throughout much of the world, in the United States they are declining. To demonstrate this decline, statistics show that in 1962 more than 75 percent of adult coffee drinkers in the United States drank an average of 3.1 cups per day. This figure fell in 1991 to 1.75 cups per day for only 51 percent of adults. Coffee sales peaked in 1986 at \$7.4 billion, but fell to \$6.8 billion by 1992.

Despite the overall drop in coffee consumption, the gourmet coffee industry is on the rise. For example, in 1988, gourmet coffee accounted for 17 percent of overall coffee sales, but that number was up to 20 percent in 1992. It is predicted that gourmet coffee sales will reach 30 percent by 1994. Gourmet sales exceeded \$800 million in 1992.

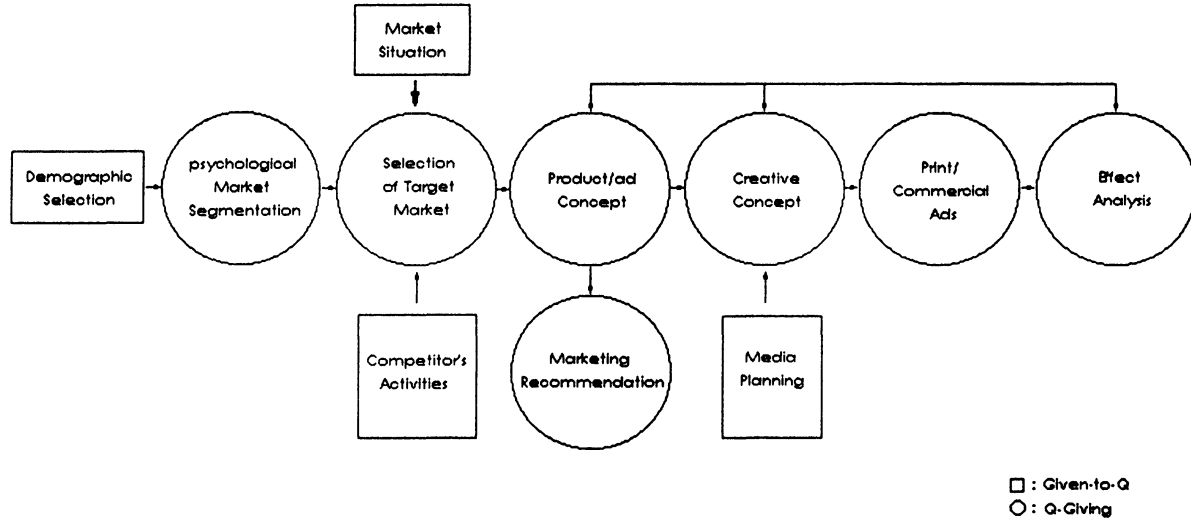


Figure 1. Q-Model in Advertising (From: Kim, 1993)

When looking at the coffee market in general, some basic trends are easily identified. As described, the consumption of coffee has been on a steady decline in the United States for many years now. This trend can be attributed to many different reasons, the most important being an increase in health concerns and societal taste changes.

One need not look far to see how health conscious our society has become. Products claiming to be "reduced calories, fat-free, and caffeine-free" not only take up a large proportion of shelf space in our stores, but advertising to promote such products has also contributed to the health craze of society. Products such as coffee are considered by many as "unhealthy," and many soft drinks have experienced great success with their "caffeine-free" versions. With this increased concern with health has come the popularity of "New Age" beverages, including juice drinks, canned teas, and sparkling water, which are in direct competition with the coffee industry.

Another important reason for the decline in coffee consumption is basic societal taste changes. Because of increasing health concerns, parents of today are not as inclined to introduce their children to coffee in the home or at as young an age. Thus, the tradition of coffee drinking is not being passed down as in generations of the past. But just because they do not drink coffee does not mean that these newer generations do not consume caffeine. Instead, they get it from other sources, such as soft drinks. This is apparent with the success of campaigns like "Coke in the morning" and Pepsi's "The taste that beats coffee cold." In fact, consumption of soft drinks in the morning has increased greatly in only the last five years. Reflecting America's changing tastes has come the introduction of iced coffee drinks in the United States, which are marketed to young non-coffee drinkers and also those looking for a change from traditional coffee.

Another trend that reflects these taste changes, specifically in coffee, is the success of gourmet coffees and specialty coffee shops throughout the United States. Responding to the wants of the consumer, marketers are finding success with flavored coffees such as mocha, chocolate, *cafe au lait* and cinnamon, reminiscent of cappuccinos and other specialty coffee drinks available in coffee houses.

Keeping these major market trends in mind, it is then important for marketers to decide which segment of the coffee industry has the most potential for growth, or which is continuing to decline in sales, thus needing a change in the product or a new advertising campaign.

Research Design

Q methodology reveals psychological characteristics about consumers that are especially useful to the creative advertiser. Results from a Q study not only suggest how people might be approached, they can predict the very success of the approach.

Q methodology would seem to hold special promise for those seeking to make more intelligible and rigorous the study of human subjectivity. In the Q methodological pursuit of this end, the researcher seeks to model or, more accurately, enables the respondent through the operational medium of a Q sort. This modeling is accomplished by a respondent systematically rank-ordering a purposively sampled set of stimuli, namely, a Q sample. The nature of the stimuli making up the Q sample is constrained only by the domain of subjectivity in which the researcher is interested, which Stephenson (1978) has termed a "communication concourse." With the purpose of the study in mind, the following research design was chosen.

Q sample

A Q sample is a set of Q statements from a Q population, which is defined as "a collection of self-referent statements made by a person in a social situation" (Stephenson, 1967). For this study, the collection of Q statements was obtained from interviews and literature. In all, 44 Q statements were finally selected and structured into four groups: those concerning the features of the product, coffee; those that deal with the social meanings connected with using the product; those that specifically inform us about consuming behavior; and a miscellaneous "other" category. (See appendix for the complete Q sample.)

P-sample

One of the most salient characteristics of Q methodology is the use of small samples. Because Q concerns intraindividual differences in significance rather than interindividual difference, it does not limit the size of subject at all. In this study, a P-sample of 22 was used; 10 from twenties, 7 from thirties, and 5 from forties in their age group.

Q sorting

Q sorting is how one "models" one's opinions or feelings about an issue or matter. The purpose of Q sorting is "to get a picture of the individual's own view of, or the attitude toward, the object being considered" (Stephenson, 1957). Each of 22 respondents was given a set of 44 Q statements and sorted them according to a rank-order continuum from "most approve" (+5) to "least approve" (-5) in customary Q technique fashion.

Analysis and Discussion

This Q study found that the coffee-buying market is comprised of two psychologically distinctive kinds of consumers. One type—to whom we will refer as the "A Treasure of Taste," or "Tasters"—considers taste to be the most important characteristic of a good coffee. To the other type, the "A Morning Ritual," a coffee's taste is secondary to its ability to energize them in the morning. Another type that our study found, "Coffee Bashers," hates the taste of coffee and gets by without it. It could be that no amount of advertising could motivate a Coffee Basher to purchase coffee. But that doesn't mean there should be no effort to expand coffee's existing market. As improbable as it sounds, many of today's Tasters and Morning Ritualists used to be Coffee Bashers.

Type I in this study is the Tasters. As Table 1 shows, Tasters choose coffee for its taste and flavor. They are likely to try a wide variety of flavors, and they are not necessarily impressed by major, national brand names in the coffee business. Coffee's utility is in its refreshment and especially in its social capacity. You'll find Tasters in coffee shops, which they consider it impressive to be knowledgeable about coffee and to serve appropriate coffees to their guests. They believe that coffee is, or can be, a youthful drink, and that one can incorporate coffee drinking into a healthy lifestyle. Perhaps most significantly, Tasters are willing to spend the extra money for the really good, flavorful stuff. Gourmet coffee is a value in their lives. They are indifferent to decaffeinated coffee, mainly because coffee is not consumed on the basis of caffeine content. If there is a good tasting decaffeinated coffee, they would probably consume it. They don't view coffee as a necessity, but as a luxury to be savored. Coffee is used in social situations, but its main purpose is simply appealing to their taste buds.

Table 1
Descending Array of Z-scores and Item of Description for Tasters,
Above and Below Plus and Minus One

Item	Description	z-score
<u>Above</u>		
20.	Taste is the major factor when I make a buying decision.	1.73
27.	I like to experiment with different flavors of coffee.	1.64
17.	Coffee shops are a great meeting place for friends.	1.49
15.	I think the flavor is the most important property of coffee.	1.48
30.	To wake up to the smell of coffee is one of life's pleasures.	1.41
24.	I like to try different flavors of flavored coffee.	1.38
1.	Coffee gets you started and keeps you going.	1.38
34.	Guests are impressed by gourmet coffees.	1.02
<u>Below</u>		
2.	Coffee is for people who have outgrown hot chocolate.	-1.11
9.	Only people who are not concerned with their health drink coffee.	-1.13
11.	Real men drink only black coffee.	-1.25
3.	Flavored coffee isn't worth the money.	-1.28
16.	Coffee is a thing of the past; it's too unhealthy.	-1.33
13.	Coffee drinkers usually work in an office setting and are somewhat lazy people.	-1.59
21.	Coffee tastes like bath water.	-1.61
4.	I like my coffee like I like my women, strong and hot.	-1.75
44.	Coffee is a worthless drink consumed by worthless people.	-2.25

The Coffee Bashers, those people outside the coffee market for the time being, were designated type II in the study results (see Table 2). They don't like the taste of coffee. The statement, "coffee tastes like bath water" was ranked at the top with a highly positive score. They mostly believe that the only reason people drink coffee is because they get addicted to the caffeine and grow accustomed to the taste that accompanies such a "high." Bashers prefer to be free from dependency

on substances. They function fine without things like coffee, and they have no use for the "high" it offers. Coffee gives people bad breath, they say, and even flavored coffee isn't worth its price.

Table 2
Descending Array of Z-scores and Item of Description for Coffee Bashers, Above and Below Plus and Minus One

Item	Description	z-score
<u>Above</u>		
21.	Coffee tastes like bath water.	1.93
29.	Coffee is addictive, just like alcohol or nicotine, since it contains caffeine.	1.76
10.	No one really likes coffee; it is an acquired taste.	1.66
35.	I think coffee is primarily a drink of older people.	1.65
31.	Coffee is a legal high.	1.47
23.	I don't like the bad breath coffee gives me.	1.41
3.	Flavored coffee isn't worth the money.	1.23
<u>Below</u>		
1.	Real men drink only black coffee.	-1.08
4.	I like my coffee like I like my women, strong and hot.	-1.22
41.	If everyone else is drinking coffee, I feel like I should, too.	-1.56
9.	Only people who are not concerned with their health drink coffee.	-1.71
13.	Coffee drinkers usually work in an office setting and are somewhat lazy people.	-2.02
44.	Coffee is a worthless drink consumed by worthless people.	-2.25

The third type was Morning Ritualist, people for whom coffee's utility is in its power to wake them up in the morning. Just like brushing their teeth, they consider drinking coffee as essential to their morning. Morning Ritualists are the most consistent coffee consumers—they drink coffee regularly and are somewhat loyal to a favorite brand. A major concern for the Morning Ritualists is coffee's effect on one's breath. But considering that they most often drink coffee by themselves in their homes, bad breath is not such a problem. Few Ritualists see coffee as a social drink, the way Tasters see it. Overall,

Morning Ritualists are less interested in impressing guests or in becoming coffee connoisseurs.

Table 3
Descending Array of Z-scores and Item Description for Morning Rituals, Above and Below Plus and Minus One

Item	Description	z-score
	<u>Above</u>	
1.	Coffee gets you started and keeps you going.	2.10
23.	I don't like the bad breath coffee gives me.	1.70
7.	Coffee is an important part of helping me wake me up in the morning.	1.55
30.	To wake up to the smell of coffee is one of life's pleasures.	1.36
19.	When I buy coffee, I always buy a specific brand.	1.33
24.	I like to try different flavors of flavored coffee.	1.09
	<u>Below</u>	
33.	Drinking gourmet coffee makes one feel like he/she has money.	-1.06
40.	The more expensive the coffee, the better	-1.17
21.	Coffee tastes like bath water.	-1.20
16.	Coffee is a thing of the past, it's too unhealthy.	-1.24
41.	If everyone else is drinking coffee, I feel like I should too.	-1.56
9.	Only people who are not concerned with their health drink coffee.	-1.71
13.	Coffee drinkers usually work in an office setting and are somewhat lazy people.	-2.02
44.	Coffee is a worthless drink consumed by worthless people.	-2.25

Tasters and Morning Ritualists agree most when it comes to the properties they like about coffee. They affirm that coffee's taste is genuinely good and that drinking it is worthwhile recreation. Both types enjoy sampling different varieties of coffee, but Ritualists prefer to avoid any outright "experimenting."

It is in the social meanings category where Tasters and Ritualists most differ. Ritualists reject the idea that they are ever pressured by social situations or by those around them into drinking coffee. Ritualists

are not concerned about impressing anyone. Tasters put a higher value on the social implications of drinking coffee. They probably drink more often in groups—or at least away from home—than at home.

In designing an advertising message geared toward the Tasters' segment of the market, the creative person will emphasize the novelty of the coffee's brand and flavor. Ads should show at least two people enjoying the coffee, perhaps with dessert, and perhaps in a non-domestic or even an exotic setting. The audience should be motivated to make a trial purchase of the brand. If more than one flavor is offered, that especially should be communicated. What should be avoided are intensely masculine associations, business-like settings and behavior, and apologies for the brand's higher relative price.

Ads designed for Ritualists should be set in the morning and should probably involve just one person. The energizing qualities of the coffee should be emphasized, including direct or indirect associations with anticipation and smell. The more obscure brands should provide compelling reasons why Morning Ritualists should pass up their regular brand in order to try the one advertised. The advertiser should avoid projecting the brand into non-intimate situations, such as workplaces or even restaurants and cafes. Remember that Ritualists consider drinking coffee another useful component in an active day—not as a special occasion or for relaxation.

Coffee advertisements directed outside of the existing market, to the Bashers, would have to be carefully written and produced. You would have to convince the Bashers that your brand of coffee doesn't taste like coffee, that it isn't addictive, that the flavor is too good to pass up, that it isn't just for older people, and that they will be well rewarded for their purchase of the brand (if they decide to take a chance on it). All that, plus you'd have to steer clear of any social, professional or egoistic associations in the ad. The advertiser would be taking a big risk and would need lots of luck to sell his or her coffee to Coffee Bashers.

When choosing a target market from the three to design a creative concept, it is very easy to rule out Coffee Bashers. Not only are they non- or light-users, the hardest group to reach through advertising, but they are probably the smallest group of the three. This leaves Tasters and Morning Ritualists as choices. In this study, however, the researcher will develop two different ad messages for these groups: print ads for the Tasters and a TV commercial for the Morning Ritualists, respectively.

Advertising Message Creation

Print Advertisements for Tasters

A Morning Ritualist is not only the group decreasing due to gourmet sales, but it is also the group targeted by most advertisers. Almost every coffee commercial focuses on the morning. For example, Folgers ads begin with the familiar jingle, "The best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup." Commercials and other media outlets depict individuals in their pajamas, or rolling out of bed, or stewing over the morning paper with a hot cup of coffee. This advertising method for coffee is overused, and with the new trend toward gourmet coffees, there is a lot of room for new and creative strategy in Tasters.

With Tasters, the advertisement can move away from a morning scene, of coffee over the morning paper alone. The two benefits the advertisement should strive to sell are taste and the social aspect of drinking coffee. The target should be the household coffee buyer, in order to reach those individuals who have replaced regular coffee with gourmet. The target would also reach a younger trendier group who can be found at coffee shops. The best vehicle would be the magazine. They are very specialized and can reach the split target with the same advertising. An example of a trendier type magazine would be *Spin* or *Rolling Stone*. For the older target audience, magazines like *Good Housekeeping* and *Redbook* should be used.

From all the discussions about Tasters as described above, the following five ad messages are finally created. Only the headline, subheadline, and description are provided:

- (1) HEADLINE: It's all about taste.
SUBHEAD: Folgers Introduces: French Vanilla
DESCRIPTION: The headline is at the top and the subhead is placed on a page size coffee cup.
- (2) HEADLINE: There's a time and a taste for everything.
SUBHEAD: The time is anytime. The taste is Folgers French Vanilla Coffee.
DESCRIPTION: An evening scene on a balcony with friends drinking gourmet coffee.
- (3) HEADLINE: There are two things that make a great coffee.
SUBHEAD: The first is taste. The second is flavor: Folger's Gourmets.

DESCRIPTION: Under the first sentence of the Subhead is a cup of coffee next to a box of Folgers. Under the second sentence of the subhead is a cup of coffee next to a Folgers' Gourmet package.

- (4) **HEADLINE:** There are two things to consider when buying coffee.
SUBHEAD: The first is taste. The second is your best friend's taste. Share it with a friend.
DESCRIPTION: A cup of coffee with a picture of a box of Folgers under the first sentence of the subhead. Under the second sentence of the subhead, is a picture of two women at the kitchen table in mid-afternoon having a cup of coffee.
- (5) **HEADLINE:** Coffee: It's not just a morning drink anymore.
SUBHEAD:
DESCRIPTION: A photograph of a couple having coffee with their dinner. The body copy would go on to describe gourmet coffee and the different flavors of it.

TV Commercial for A Morning Ritualist

For this encoding project, the researcher has chosen to market a small-label coffee brand to a Morning Ritual. A fictional client, the LaLima Coffee Company, was proposed. The LaLima is a maker of coffee grounds in various specialty flavors. The concept for its commercial is a direct narrative testimonial about how LaLima's coffees put spice into daily routines.

On the creative side, I envision a young woman waiting for her morning coffee to brew while she attempts a crossword puzzle in the newspaper. The anticipation and the smell, however, make her unable to concentrate on the puzzle. She tells us how this happened and how she switched from a major brand to LaLima. Finally, the audience is informed of the available flavors and is urged to look for LaLima coffees in their grocery stores. If what we know about psychological market segmentation is absolutely true, these ads could very well motivate lots of trial purchases among the targeted type, "A Morning Ritualist." The following is one of the possible commercials we can make:

ACTRESS: This is what I do every morning. Coffee and a crossword puzzle. It's been that way since college. See, I used to buy the big-name brand, because I didn't think it mattered. I need coffee to wake me up, and that's it, you know? But then a friend bought me a package of this LaLima coffee, a small imported brand that makes all these unusual flavors.

Ever since, LaLima is the only coffee I'll buy. Oh, it's really affordable,

and these days I see it in just about every grocery store. Trouble is, with all these great new smells in my kitchen, I can hardly concentrate on my puzzles anymore!

VOICE-OVER: LaLima Ground Coffees come in five delicious flavors: El Greco, Andean Fruit, Spanish Mocha Mint, Bahia Vanilla, and Carmen Raspberry. For a limited time, save 50 cents on the assortment pack of all five flavors.

ACTRESS: (MINUTES LATER): (DRINKING COFFEE AND WORKING ON HER CROSSWORD PUZZLE): Do you know a seven-letter word for "invigorate?" (SHE CHUCKLES)

DESCRIPTION: It is a message that integrates several of the characteristics Ritualists look for in their coffee. Plus it takes into consideration the circumstances in which they normally drink coffee.

The ad features a young person (probably a woman) in her kitchen not long after she has gotten out of bed in the morning. She is obviously a little frazzled. She is anticipating that first cup of coffee to get her going. When the spot begins, the actress is preparing her coffee machine, turning it on, and so forth. She begins talking directly to the camera, moves to her kitchen table and sits down. After the voice-over the announcer (a man) says his portion, the scene cuts to a few minutes later in the woman's kitchen. The coffee has brewed, and she is drinking a cup. At this point she appears more alert and can be the expressive self she really is.

A testimonial ad would work well to convince Ritualists that it isn't only the weird, coffee-house types who drink flavored coffee. There are other Ritualists who have flavored coffee every morning, who really enjoy it, and who get the same needed caffeine "high" from flavored as they would from unflavored.

The ad incorporates references to waking up, daily routines, coffee's aroma, brand loyalty, thrift in shopping, and location of purchase—all of which are important to the average Ritualist. Significantly, the information does not come from an off-screen narrator, but from a regular-looking human being whom we see and who talks directly to us. These things will make a difference.

The approach may be too sophisticated for a few people, but it almost has to be. The Tasters probably constitute most of LaLima's existing market, and they can easily become jaded when "their brands" start appealing to wider audiences. LaLima is treading on fragile ground. That's why such a complex ad, say 60-second spot, is presented. If only LaLima really existed, I think this campaign could

be a true success.

Appendix

Q Sample for coffee study

1. Coffee gets you started and keeps you going.
2. Coffee is for people who have outgrown hot chocolate.
3. Flavored coffee isn't worth the money.
4. I like my coffee like I like my women, strong and hot.
5. It's rather rude to not offer coffee when entertaining guests.
6. Drinking decaffeinated coffee is like shooting a gun that isn't loaded.
7. Coffee is an important part of helping me wake me up in the morning.
8. A lot of people drink coffee only because their peers do, as in business meetings.
9. Only people who are not concerned with their health drink coffee.
10. No one really likes coffee; it is an acquired taste.
11. Real men drink only black coffee.
12. Iced-coffee and gourmet coffees are merely a fad and not suitable to real coffee drinkers.
13. Coffee drinkers usually work in an office setting and are somewhat lazy people.
14. Coffee tastes best when consumed with cake or cookies.
15. I think the flavor is the most important property of coffee.
16. Coffee is a thing of the past; it's too unhealthy.
17. Coffee shops are a great meeting place for friends.
18. People do not rely on media for information about coffee.
19. When I buy coffee, I always buy a specific brand.
20. Taste is the major factor when I make a buying decision.
21. Coffee tastes like bath water.
22. Decaffeinated coffee is pointless.
23. I don't like the bad breath coffee gives me.
24. I like to try different flavors of flavored coffee.
25. Drinking coffee helps me socialize.
26. Coffee commercials are boring.
27. I like to experiment with different flavors of coffee.
28. Gourmet coffee is only for special occasions.
29. Coffee is addictive, just like alcohol or nicotine since it contains caffeine.
30. To wake up to the smell of coffee is one of life's pleasures.
31. Coffee is a legal high.
32. Drinking coffee makes me feel more professional.
33. Drinking gourmet coffee makes one feel like he/she has money.
34. Guests are impressed by gourmet coffees.

35. I think coffee is primarily a drink of older people.
36. It's easier for me to trust a national name-brand coffee than some obscure brand.
37. When I shop for coffee, I'm satisfied just to find the best deal for my money.
38. "Specialty coffees" are too specialized.
39. I think coffee beans are inconvenient and messy.
40. The more expensive the coffee, the better I feel about myself.
41. If everyone else is drinking coffee, I feel like I should, too.
42. A social gathering must serve coffee.
43. Packaging is what makes the coffee better.
44. Coffee is a worthless drink consumed by worthless people.

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