



Variables contributing to the time spent by customers in the dining experience

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Abstract

The service industry is one in which consumer taste and mentality play a huge role, in addition to the highlighted importance of customer satisfaction through ongoing service experience. This is why this industry is resplendent with examples of instances where once-market leaders have been unable to keep up with the fast-moving trends in rapidly changing customer preferences. It is very important for companies to bring about changes so as to accommodate consumer preferences. This study aims at following consumer patterns through secondary research and finding out what are the key determinants that lead a consumer to choosing a restaurant.

Keywords: service industry, consumer, restaurant

Introduction

In an article published by the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, the direct correlation between customer loyalty and customer satisfaction has been brought out. A similar relationship exists between the variables such as service quality and customer evaluation of service provided. The perception in the mind of the consumer is of vital salience, and therefore, it is important to understand the meaning and implications of the terms "quality" and "satisfaction", which one will find may vary from customer to customer. Both the terms are usually found to hold different impressions in the minds of the consumers, as there are varying levels of associations of emotional quotient and other temperamental factors related to the customers' preferences.

Another detailed article published by the *Journal of Business Ethics*, talks about the implications of the burgeoning relevance of customer preferences in the 21st century on the businesses in the service industry, specifically focusing on corporate service chains. This highlights two major implications, the first being to allow their employees to exercise reasonableness in their treatment with the customers, be it during the provision of the service is being offered, made, or even at the time of execution of After-Sales Services. The other major consequence is to ensure ethical delivery of the service in order to enhance the level of satisfaction attained by the customer, and in turn, enhance the chances of obtaining customer loyalty.

Observations

Taking a different perspective under the microscope, an article which seems of importance has been published by the *University of California Press*. It brings into light the problems caused as a result of the excess of media reviews available at the fingertips of the probable customer, which has

caused limited customer loyalty to take root into any of the parts of the competitors in the service industry.

Although this fact is considered of relevance to all producers of products and services, it holds more relevance for the latter that customer attitude towards "Frequency Programmes" (FPs) is also subject to fluctuations due to various sub-variables such as age, income group, career line, etcetera. This effect has been observed in an article published by the *Journal of Marketing Research*, where in the relationship between investment in FPs on behalf of customers and demand for luxury rewards has been developed upon and found to be directly proportional. If the first variable, i.e., customer investment (only monetary) is replaced by similar variables such as any sort of program requirements and/or enforced increase in customers' effort to avail the FP, a similar directly correlated relationship can be mapped.

These observations lead to the development of the following

Factors affecting ultimate goal of Customer Loyalty

- 1. Quality:** This is usually a term in the minds of the customers, whose means corresponds to that of the core product or service being offered and not the ancillary units involved. It is highly essential to have a strong qualitative assessment in the minds of the consumers, in order to ensure repeated footfall and/or presence and usage of service, and will thus ultimately ensure customer loyalty.
- 2. Satisfaction:** This is usually more centrally- based on the additional- and after-sales services offered by the main service- provider and help determine the overall image in the mind of the customer. This usually encompasses the "quality" aspect of customer perception of the product as well.
- 3. Employee Reasonableness:** This depends upon the

internal management and culture of the organisation, mainly. It is also dependent on individual discretion of the employees of the service provider, in terms of providing the entire experience of the service, including the pre- and post- service offerings.

4. **Ethical delivery of the service:** This has become of vital importance, especially with the rise in awareness towards customer rights and duties as well as distinctive descriptions and definitions of the term “ethics” in the modern world.
5. **Media presence and reviews:** This is where the vitality of 360 degree marketing in the 21st century gets brought to the forefront, and importance of media- propaganda and “image” comes into play, This is the advertising and political aspect of consumer behaviour at play.
6. **Accessibility of FPS:** This shares an inverse relationship with demand for such programs by customers, as easier the process of availing such programs, easier will it be to attract customers to such long-term trust-building programmes, thus ensuring customer loyalty

Factors affecting dining experience specifically

In an article published by the Faculty of Accountancy and Management- Department of International Business, it has been found that the factors influencing dining experience and ensuring repeat visits can majorly be divided under three sub-heads, namely-food quality, service quality as well as restaurant environment. These factors exhibit a direct impact on customer satisfaction, which in turn ensures strengthened

revisit chances. These factors are further influenced by various other causal agents which influence individual perception of an offer of dining service.

Another important aspect that one must take into account is certain cultural and demographical factors. These factors give basic shape and structure to an individual’s personality, and therefore are held responsible for determining the basic likes and dislikes of a person. This effect has been explicated in the article published by the African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure. The different approach accepted in this article is with reference to customers’ expectations and how they influence demand for certain services even more than other, obvious factors such as stronger promotion and marketing strategies, ambience, etcetera.

However, the burgeoning importance of aesthetics, interior design and restaurant design and environment cannot be ignored, especially with the majority of the customers being millennial and those belonging to Gen Z. Customers tend to impart value to factors such as cutlery, furniture design, etcetera, when they feel like they are paying enough to validate their expectations. Colour, design, sound, lights, and spacing play highly important roles in forming the perception of a place in the mind of the customer. But the factor of highest importance, in this aspect, is the staff in addition to the culture and values they observe. The following characteristics are a necessity to which a consumer reacts to his time spent at a restaurant. These criteria were gathered by marketing researchers. They have ranked consumer choices to their loyalty, time spent and their traits as follows-

Table 1

Factors affecting consumer loyalty	Traits affecting consumer loyalty (consumer side)	Factors affecting time spent in a dining experience
Quality	Decisiveness	Ambience
Satisfaction	Patience	Distance
Timely delivery of service	Consumer preference	Quality of food serve
Brand association		Price sensitivity
Media presence		Service
Frequency Programmes		Type of food served

According to a research an average consumer thinks on these lines to make a purchase decision. The ranking has been given to the same and there is a clear co-relation amongst the different restaurants and the type of food the consumers have. This however has been limited by several factors which include culture, tastes, and other such decisions. Every customer does not prefer to sit at a particular dining area for long. Service time plays a key factor in the ease of customer satisfaction achievement. Fast food restaurants often have less dining time as compared to fine dines. This has been often proven at cases of fast food joints such as Kentucky Fried Chicken, Mc Donald’s, Taco Bell Vs. West In, Taj Sapphire Restaurant.

Conclusion

The research paper clearly distinguishes the various factors that affect a customer’s choice or preference to certain attributes of a dining experience. It is very essential to a

restaurant to adopt to these criteria and change with the rising or changing consumer demands to be successful. A customer’s perception can be determined by various factors including advertisement and promotion but his loyalty remains unchanged when he observes the comfort he feels in a particular place at a particular time. It is essential for companies to realise this fact and act accordingly.

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