



DINING EXPERIENCE OF GUESTS - A STUDY OF SELECTED RESORTS

Davar Vinti

Department of Home Science, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

Malik Sandeep

Department of Tourism and Hotel Management
Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra

ABSTRACT

Purpose - The aim of the study is to assess factors affecting dining experience of guests of selected resorts of Haryana, Punjab and Himanchal Pradesh.

Design/methodology/approach - The study used interview technique. A questionnaire with the help of informal interviews with resort guests industry was structured for this study. The study was undertaken at selected resorts situated in Haryana, Punjab and Himanchal Pradesh involving face-to-face administration of the questionnaire. A useable sample of 90 participants resulted.

Findings - The results indicate that there is statistically significant difference between male and female respondents regarding quantity of the dish served, nutritional values provided by the dish and religion of the respondent.

Originality/value - The study has been the first attempt to find out the factors affecting the dining experience of guests of selected resorts situated in Haryana, Punjab and Himanchal Pradesh.

Article Type: Research paper

Keyword(s): Customer, Satisfaction, Dining Experiences

INTRODUCTION

Customer satisfaction/dissatisfaction began to emerge as a major topic in the field of consumer research in late 1970s (Andreasen, 1977; Berkman and Gilson, 1986; Czepiel & Rosenberg, 1977; Handy, 1977). Gullede (1990) indicated that customer satisfaction is a result of what customer thinks will happen (expectations), interacting with what customer thinks did happen (perceptions). When a purchase expectation is perceived

to have been rewarded as a result of the purchase the customer receives satisfaction (Berkman & Gilson, 1986). This will prompt repeat purchases. Dissatisfaction occurs when customer's expectations and perceptions are not matched. It has been estimated that one tenth to one third of purchases result in consumer dissatisfaction (Berkman & Gilson, 1986).

Richard Oliver has developed the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Oliver, 1980). According to this theory, customers purchase goods and services with pre-purchase expectations about anticipated performance. Once the product or service has been purchased and used, outcomes are compared against expectations. When outcome matches expectations, confirmation occurs. Disconfirmations occur when there are differences between expectations and outcomes. Negative disconfirmation occurs when outcome is less than expectations or in other words when product/service performance is less than expected. Positive disconfirmation occurs when outcome is greater than expectations, or in other words when product/service performance is better than expected. Satisfaction is caused by confirmation or positive disconfirmation and dissatisfaction is caused by negative disconfirmation.

Andersson and Mossberg (2004) has explored that the restaurant as an arena for a multidimensional experience. Restaurant managers must be aware of customer needs and produce services that comply with what the customers want. Physiological needs (satisfied by food and beverage) are not the only needs that customers wish to satisfy by going to a restaurant.

According to Iglesias, M. P. and Guille'n, M.J.Y. (2004), for firms that operate in competitive markets, achieving satisfaction for their customers is particularly important as the satisfied customers will repeat their purchases, they will be more loyal to the firm and they moreover will become the most efficient and effective communication resource of the firm by generating favourable communication.

Food is one of the main factors that decide the satisfaction or dissatisfaction. A fine dining experience can lead to an excellent trip where as a bad one will spoil the guest's vacation and resort's image. The dining experience can be broken down into three stages:

- (1) the pre-process stage, which extends from a customer's arrival at the restaurant until he or she orders the meal; the visitors evaluate the surroundings, cleanliness, orderliness, promptness and menu.

- (2) the in-process stage, which involves placing an order and consuming the meal; and,
- (3) the post-process stage, from check settlement until the customer leaves

In this study, the important factors of each stage of dining experience have been considered from customer's perspective which ultimately leads to customer satisfaction.

This study has been conducted on the resorts in three developing states of India.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on primary data collected by administering structured questionnaire to the guests of selected resorts. For this purpose convenience sampling technique is used for selecting resorts from Haryana, Punjab and Himanchal Pradesh and the respective guests. In all 15 resorts, 5 from each mentioned state were selected. The sample size included 100 resort guests, drawn from mentioned resorts. But a usable sample of 90 participants resulted.

Before starting this research, a series of informal interviews were conducted with resort guests to try to gain some insight into this matter. Based on these interviews, questionnaire to find out the factors responsible for customer satisfaction was developed. There were a large number of factors that came in but the most stated factors which customers felt that were integral part of dining experience were included in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire included Quality (includes taste, flavor, eye appeal, temperature of food), Quantity, Nutritional Value, Value for Money, Religion, Personal Hygiene of Staff, Hygiene of Crockery and Cutlery, Hygiene of Restaurant, availability of food on Menu, Time taken for taking the order and Serving the food. The study uses a Likert scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents Very important and 1 represents Not Important at All.

ANALYSIS

From a usable sample of 90 respondents, 50 (55.5%) were male and 40 (44.4%) were female. Table 1 shows the demographic profile of all the respondents.

Table-1 Demographic profile of Respondents

		N=90	
S.No.	Description	No. of Respondents	Respondents (%)
1.	GENDER		
	(a) Male	50	55.5
	(b) Female	40	44.4
2.	AGE (in years)		
	(a) <20	15	16.6
	(b) 20-30	35	38.8
	(c) 30-40	30	33.3
	(d) >40	10	11.1
3.	MARITAL STATUS		
	(a) Single	30	33.3
	(b) Married	60	66.6
4.	PURPOSE OF VISIT		
	(a) Business	10	11.1
	(b) Leisure	55	61.1
	(c) Pilgrimage	05	5.5
	(d) Others	20	22.2
5.	INCOME (per annum/in Rs.)		
	(a) <200000	10	11.1
	(b) 200000-400000	45	50
	(c) >400000	25	27.7
	(d) dependent	10	11.1

The table explains that the maximum of the respondents fall in the age group of 20-30 (38.8 %) followed by the age group of 30-40 (33.3%), less than 20 (16.6%) and more than 40 (11.1%).

Of the total 66.6% of the respondents were married and the rest 33.3% were single.

The purpose of visit of maximum guests i.e. 61.1% was leisure, followed by other purposes such as party, birthday celebration etc 22.2%, for business 11.1% and for pilgrimage 5.5%.

Majority of the guests i.e. 50%, belonged to annual income group ranging from Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs 4 lakhs, followed by income group of more than Rs 4 lakhs i.e. 27.7% and the last position was shared by the group income less than Rs. 2 lakhs with dependents (it includes non earning spouses and children).

The customers have been found to be concerned about quality particularly the taste of food, personal hygiene of the staff and the cleanliness of crockery and cutlery as indicated in the **Table-2**. The guests overall expectations of good quality of food, cleanliness, high grade personal hygiene and spotlessly clean, shining crockery and cutlery is not something undesirable and unprecedented when they are paying high prices in resorts. Every person looks forward to get the best food and service while dining and staying out.

The nutritional quantity of food has been given the least rating. It was further explored that women were more concerned about nutritional content of food as compared to their male counterpart, as there was statistically significant difference between the two samples at 0.05% level.

Table-2: Analysis of factors responsible for guest satisfaction.

	Male		Female		Mean Difference	t
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation		
1. Quality:						
I. Taste	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	a
II. Flavor	4.64	0.75	4.70	0.56	-0.06	-0.42
III. Eye appeal	4.90	0.30	4.88	0.33	0.03	0.37
IV. Temperature of food	4.88	0.33	4.90	0.30	-0.02	-0.30
2. Quantity	4.90	0.30	4.38	0.87	0.53	3.99**
3. Nutritional Value	3.46	0.99	4.18	0.81	-0.72	-3.67**
4. Value for money	4.70	0.46	4.88	0.33	-0.18	-2.01
5. Religion	4.80	0.40	5.00	0.00	-0.20	-3.13**
6. Personal hygiene of staff	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	a
7. Hygiene of restaurant	4.86	0.35	4.93	0.27	-0.06	-0.97
8. Hygiene of crockery and cutlery	5.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	0.00	a
9. Availability of food on menu.	3.82	0.96	3.35	1.25	0.47	2.01
10. Time taken						
i. for taking order	4.22	0.86	4.23	0.70	0.00	-0.03
ii. for serving food	4.74	0.44	4.70	0.46	0.04	0.42
Note:						
1. a- t cannot be computed because the standard deviations of both groups are 0.						
2. ** t-test two tail probability < 0.05						

The quantity of the food has been rated higher by men than women and there was statistically significant difference between the two samples at 0.05% level. All the respondents were of the opinion that there should be standard portion size in all the hotels/resorts/restaurants in the country. Some of them went to the extent of commenting that even size of tea cup varies from one restaurant to another. Standardisation of portion sizes in near future should be taken as a challenge by one and all of us associated with hospitality industry.

The visitors to resort look forward to having fun but deep inside they also want value or money as indicated in their responses.

Males did not consider religion as a major factor in selecting a meal or restaurant where as females was not ready to compromise on their religious sentiments and there was statistically significant difference between the two samples at 0.05% level.

The nature of females provided them an edge over the males to be more particular of hygiene of a place. In this case also a mean of 4.92 was apprehensive of restaurant cleanliness.

The availability of menu items did not appear to be a deciding factor of dining experience of both men and women which reflects that the selected respondents may not be very demanding and fussy.

The guests reported that waiting longer than perceived lead to irritation and diminished their satisfaction. By the same token if a meal proceeds at a tempo much faster than expected diners would feel rushed and would conclude that their server is not willing or able to attend to their needs.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this study of selected resorts, customer satisfaction strengths were found in quality of food per se taste, flavor, eye appeal; cleanliness; personal hygiene of serving staff. A vulnerability of satisfaction was noted in nutrition and availability of food on menu. The female respondents were more concerned about hygiene and religious sanctity.

The staff and management of the resorts are supposed to be responsible for the guests satisfaction, but they often don't conduct any kind of research except verbal note on how to determine whether they have delivered a satisfactory dining experience to their valuable guests. The finds of the present study would help them in identifying their strengths and weaknesses and improving those areas thereof. The study also is laying various

suggestions which would lead to greater satisfaction among the diners.

- Focus efforts to improve food quality in terms of taste, flavor, eye appeal, and hygiene of staff and service equipments as all most all the guests have selected these factors to be most satisfying for dining experience.
- Assess opportunities for reducing duration during the preparation and service of food.
- Improve service quality so as to make dining special experience for the privileged guests of resorts.
- Consider giving customers explicit control over the dining experience.

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