Chapter 8
An Examination of the Role of Restaurant Attributes on Patrons Dining Experience and Their Post–Purchase Intentions

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this chapter is to determine the relationship between restaurant attributes and customers' overall perception and return patronage, and whether dining occasions relate to return patronage. A sample survey method was used, with a structured questionnaire as the research instrument, at a restaurant in Bangalore, (India). Data from 400 restaurant patrons as respondents was used for statistical analysis. Frequencies, Means, Chi-square and Spearman rank-order correlation were used to analyze data. Findings showed that there is a correlation between restaurant attributes and customers' overall perception. Results also indicated that there is a relationship between return patronage and restaurant attributes and dining occasions. Managerial implications are addressed and discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Dining out in restaurants is a ubiquitous, significant and growing international phenomenon. Everywhere one travels, people from all ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, ages, socioeconomic groups and both genders can be observed eating and drinking out in independent, locally owned and operated establishments or in strongly branded multiunit chain outlets (Powers & Barrows, 1999). Restaurants serve both our social and biological needs. Restaurants can be divided into two categories: those serving predominantly our social needs- the dining market, and those serving our biological needs- the eating market. Because dining is predominantly a social event, service is important. The servers are expected to be friendly, as signified by a warm smile. In relatively expensive restaurants serving the dining market, the operation that falls short on significant measures of service is likely to lose customers quickly (Dittmer, 2002).

There is a movement towards trying out new and exotic foods, increasing interest in vegetarian items, as well as a growing use of spices, herbs, and hot peppers. Asian foods are getting more popular with cuisines from China, Thailand, and Japan in the lead (Bharath & Prema, 2004). Indian cuisine is hot, spicy, flavored with herbs, and offers many vegetarian options. Eating has long been central to the culture of India, as diet is linked to notions of purity and self-control. The cosmopolitan Indian is now eager to explore new tastes and absorb global trends and is no longer limited by geographical or cultural boundaries. India has several thousand multi-cuisine eateries that dot the cities.

According to a study conducted by FHRAI (2004, p.13), some of the emerging culinary trends internationally include the popularity of health foods, use of fresh and authentic ingredients, acceptance of new fusion concepts and establishing of the chef entrepreneur. In India multinational restaurant chains had to make a downward price revision and offer more vegetarian toppings to increase sales volume. This led to a dramatic improvement in their performance. They are also adding more spicy items in their menus to satisfy Indian taste buds. International and domestic multi-unit restaurant groups are expected to drive the expansion in the restaurant industry in India. Among the leading trends in this regard would be the expansion of quick service Asian restaurants, fusion concepts, restaurants with a focus on entertainment, and ethnic and regional cuisine restaurants. High-income Indian consumers are seeking variety in their choice of food. Urban Indian consumers are aware of various international cuisines (Continental, Chinese, Mexican, Italian, Thai and Japanese) and an increasing number are willing to try new foods.

Further, FHRAI (2004, p.15) established that eating out has evolved into a popular trend among Platinum households in India. IRS Platinum de-fines super rich as any household that has a colour television, refrigerator, washing machine and a car. Two out of five such households eat out at least once a month. Approximately, 39 percent of all the super-rich households reside in urban India today. This is highest in Bangalore (43 percent) and lowest in Pune (33 percent). Bangalore pays the highest monthly rents, and spends the highest among all cities on maintenance and on travelling and conveyance. It is estimated that Indians spend Rs 350 billion annually on eating out. More ever, of this Rs 350 billion, the organised sector accounts for only Rs 20 billion, suggesting a tremendous potential for growth in this area.

The website of the restaurant states that it is sitting on the 13th floor of Barton Center on M G Road in Bangalore; the restaurant serves an unusual mix of Indian, Parsee, European and South Asian food. The restaurant offers an extensive cocktail menu and a vast number of seating options on two terraces the restaurant is an ideal choice of an intimate diner, a family gathering or even a corporate celebration. Dinners at the restaurant are a la carte, but with a host of custom designed set-course menus to choose from. Lunches at the restaurant between Monday and Friday are the value for money, Executive Lunch buffets. The best of Indian, Asian and European selections in a buffet spread featuring close to 28 dishes in 4 courses for a price of Rs.305.00 plus taxes. On Saturday's they specially offer World on Plate Buffet featuring a truly expansive 5 course buffet with many signature dishes from our Indian, Tandoor, Parsee, European and Asian repertoire. This truly One Size Fits all buffet has something in it for all tastes and all appetites at Rs.335+ Tax and service charges (http://www.ebonywithaview.com/ebony.html).

For the last few years, the restaurant industry has experienced changes in Bangalore, a fast developing metropolitan city of India, such as heightened competitive pressures from the new

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