



Fine Dining: Service Quality Attributes, Customer Satisfaction And Its Impact On Customer's Post-Dining Behavioral Intentions

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study the key parameters that drive customer perception, satisfaction and its effect on their post-dining behavioral intentions with respect to fine dining restaurants in Nagpur City. The mediating role of customer satisfaction is assessed between restaurants' key attributes of service quality and behavioral intentions. This paper shall also try to highlight the advantages of imbibing the new concept of service as compared to the traditional ones and how by focusing on quality and personalized services along with improving the quality of staff and polishing their service skills can impart the restaurant an edge over the others in the field. Design/methodology/approach – The study was carried out in 25 selected fine dining restaurants of Nagpur. Primary data was collected from a sample of 178 customers dining in the selected fine dining restaurants of Nagpur through a self-administered questionnaire. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, ANOVA and t-test method using SPSS. Practical implications-: This study will facilitate restaurants' managers to understand the positive as well as the negative aspects of service quality in order to build and maintain long-term relationship between restaurants and customers.

Keywords: Fine Dining, Service Quality, Customer Perception, Customer's Satisfaction, Customer's Loyalty & Customer's Behavioral Intentions.

Purpose

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The restaurant industry in Nagpur is mainly made up of small, family owned and operated business that also competes with large international chain affiliated organizations. Problem is, many restaurant owners fail to take the time to chart out what specifically they want their service to look and feel like. It has been argued that these owner/managers are often unaware of the benefits that can be obtained from focusing and adapting the changing dimensions of customer service, resulting in inadequate training of the staff and ultimately hindering their effort to provide high quality service. It has often been observed that the restaurant industry is dominated by high degree of casual, untrained and lower quality of staff that has led to concerns about delivering excellent customer service in terms of quality and consistency. Often the management ignores the personalized services until and unless asked for by the customer. Since the staffs are not adequately trained their contact with the customer does not convert into to a wow experience each time. Thus this research aims to study the key parameters that drive customer perception and satisfaction. The study shall also try to analyze the effectiveness of prioritizing these parameters and its impact on the restaurant loyalty and customer retention.

Introduction

Over the last decade, hospitality industry has undergone a series of rapid metamorphoses. The changing aspirations, choices and behavioral patterns of the consumers form an essential parameter, driving this transformation. This combined with the entry of international players into the market and the aggressive burgeoning of the casual and fine dining restaurants by the Indian entrepreneurs, has significantly changed the industry scenario. Earlier, the food services industry comprised of numerous unorganized players and a few international brands. However, in the current situation the industry is constantly adapting itself and evolving by identifying and setting trends, be it culinary, service, marketing, design or most importantly, the concept. To stay relevant to the changing customer receptivity, new and innovative concepts have begun to carve out their space. In fact, they've provided a leeway in setting an example, to make dining out more about a complete experience, than only about the product.

For a restaurant owner, great customer service is essential for success. Successful restaurants employ managers and employees who perform at a high level and work to accomplish the restaurant's goals. Restaurant employees who don't care will inevitably lead to poor service, a lack of attention to detail and, eventually, decreased sales. All employees and managers of a restaurant must focus on the customer to ensure success. Customers are the lifeblood of restaurants, and if employees do not make a point to satisfy the customer, the restaurant will see less and less people walk through the doors. The question arises as to how can an owner deliver excellent customer service at the restaurant? Customer service in context to restaurants may be defined as, "Customer service is an effort that aims at fulfilling the guest needs (service, product, and environment) with the intention to provide

unforgettable dining experience". Customer service is equal parts communication and genuine attention to the diners. Customer service covers many different parts of restaurants day to day operations, going far beyond the front of the house staff. When guests visit a restaurant, the owner wants them to feel welcome. When the management treats the diners with care and respect while providing an excellent meal, they will come back to the restaurant again and again. Satisfied customers are integral to any business model. It doesn't matter how fabulous the restaurant décor is or how delicious the food is, if the service doesn't meet or exceed customers' expectations, there is a good chance they won't come back.

Rise of Fine Dining and Niche Restaurants in India

Fine dining is just not about food and going out to eat. It encompasses a greater area that adds on to a complete dining experience which includes service quality, personal attention, ambience, décor, presentation of the food, use of gourmet ingredients, flavors and cuisines, etc. With people travelling more often, ease of internet, larger disposable income, popularity of blogs and tweets, people seek experiential eating or fine dining. Greater awareness of global cuisines combined with ease of availability of ingredients to prepare these dishes, fine dining is the new trend. With Fine dining slowly coming of age in India, restaurants are doing all they can to elevate the dining experience of the consumers by providing them with excellent customer service and a memorable dining experience.

According to a 2013 NRAI report on food services in India as published in hospitalitybizindia.com, the fine dining segment is growing at a healthy rate of 15 percent and depends largely on the affluent consumer. The concept of fine dining is all about luxury and poise with beautiful and elegant table layout, impeccable service, fancy menu, rich ambience and well-presented food.

An interesting trend has begun and due to an increased interest in India as an investment destination, many international fine-dining chains are waiting in the wings to set up shop in India. Another interesting development in the restaurant industry is the rise of niche restaurants serving specific cuisines and specialties. No longer is the restaurant business divided into North Indian and South Indian. There are many more categories of specialty restaurants serving delicacies from Kashmir to Kerala. It's simple – people want to taste good food. They want to taste different food. The state or cuisine specific restaurants are simply meeting the demand of the new Indian consumer who doesn't shy away from experimenting with food that he or she is not entirely familiar with. (Rise of the Restaurant Industry in India)

Literature Review

A fine dining restaurant can be characterized as a full-service restaurant. It is primarily because of the table service. (Spears & Gregoire, 2007). The expectations of guests

toward the restaurant services depend on the type of the restaurant (Kim & Moon, 2009). Three fundamental features in a fine dining restaurant which will affect the customer's impression are food quality, service of the restaurant and the atmosphere (Namkung & Jang, 2007). Fine dining restaurants are expected to be exceptional from the regular restaurants, in terms of everything, i.e., utmost level of prices among restaurants with extraordinary standards, finest ambiance, operating procedures and atmosphere and above all excellent service.

The restaurant image is recognized as an essential component of the customer satisfaction and therefore it is a cornerstone of the success of the fine dining restaurants. Downs and Haynes (1984) pointed out the relationship between the restaurant success and the effectiveness of its image management. A fine dining restaurant, therefore, must focus on its image using increased upgrades and improvements in décor, ambiance and interior design to attract customers and to differentiate itself from its competitors (Downs & Haynes, 1984). To impart a competitive edge and build a restaurant image to cater to the elegant class, customer service needs to be better than that perceived by the diners.

The most important steps required to build successful rapport with customers are to provide individual attention to each customer, understand their specific needs and customize the services to match and fulfill these needs in the minimum possible time. Understanding the customers' needs is the first step in developing customer relations that focuses on personal preferences and choices, loyalty, retention and long-term relationships. It also helps in transition from customer satisfaction to customer delight.

Therefore a fine dining restaurant should always have well trained and experienced staff. Also the restaurants should have employee friendly policies as satisfied and friendly staff contributes to a positive service climate, customer satisfaction and firm performance. The restaurants should focus on continuous improvement and development of service quality provided by them so as to meet the changing needs of diners.

As per a study by Hsu, Hsiao and Tsai (2018), it was determined that fine dining restaurant consumers attach high value to the cleanliness of the environment and equipment as well as the reliable guarantee of immediate service. Along with food quality, consumers look forward and value meticulous service, consideration for consumers, pleasant and welcoming environment and the capacity to please consumers. Customers also want servers to make them feel distinguished, and esteem is a consumer demand that fine dining restaurants must satisfy (Hsu, Hsiao, & Tsai, 2018).

The finding of the study by Garg and Amelia (2016) suggest that the humanic clues, such as the service provided by the staffs, their body language, the tone used, and all things regarding the service provider, have a strong influence on the first impression. Also, it was found that the first impressions have a strong impact on the customers' decision behavior and behavioural intentions. In order for the restaurateurs to keep customer relations, they should maintain good staffs' capabilities, the physical appearance of the staffs, and customer satisfaction.

Once the service given by the staffs is disappointing, customers will not come back to the restaurant. The first impression happens only once in a short period. Thus, the humanic clues, which are the staffs and service provided to the guests, should not be ignored (Garg & Amelia, 2016).

As per the study by Shahzadi, Malik, Ahmad, & Shabbir, (2018) it was found out that customers always reflect high expectations from service especially in restaurants' settings because they expect to get better quality of services in order to become a satisfied and build their revisit intentions. The results suggest that in fine dining restaurant, better quality of services helps in creating satisfied customers and build their post-dining behavioral intentions which create a positive word-of-mouth. The results help the restaurant managers to focus more on customer-oriented strategies as the customers are considered as the actual asset of an organization in order to get high profit and build a positive image of organization. The findings also recommend that customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between behavioral intentions and overall key restaurant attributes of perceived service quality. It suggests that the customers' behavioral intentions only build with restaurants when they are actually satisfied with the quality of key restaurants attributes (Shahzadi, Malik, Ahmad, & Shabbir, 2018).

Research Methodology

Objectives

1. The primary objective of this study is to identify key parameters that drive Customer perception and satisfaction right from the point of entering the fine dining restaurant, all through dining up to exiting the said place.
2. To map and prioritize these parameters in the order of their importance in determining the level of customer satisfaction from the fine dining restaurant and its effect on customer retention.
3. To analyze and highlight the importance of personalized and timely customer service as a tool for meeting customers' new expectations.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived quality attributes, i.e., food quality attributes, service quality attributes and atmospheric quality attributes of fine dining restaurants

Alternative Hypothesis (HA): There is significant relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived quality attributes, i.e., food attributes, service quality attributes and atmospheric quality attributes of fine dining restaurants.

Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant impact of customer satisfaction on post dining behavioral intentions of diners of fine dining restaurants.

Alternative Hypothesis (HA): There is significant impact of customer satisfaction on post dining behavioral intentions of diners of fine dining restaurants.

Methodology

Data Collection: Overall 25 well-reputed fine dining restaurants were selected from Nagpur city on the basis of their location and price. Total sample size was 178, which is fairly large enough to illustrate the clear picture of whole population. The targeted sample was collected from the customers who visited restaurants through the non-probability, convenience sampling technique.

Data was collected from restaurants' customers through self-administered questionnaire. Researcher has personally distributed and collected the questionnaire from willing customers of fine dining restaurants. The questionnaire consists of four parts: first part includes questions to find out perceptions of customers regarding the importance of key restaurants attributes while choosing a restaurant to dine in. Second part focuses on level of satisfaction of customers with the key attributes of fine dining restaurants. Five-point Likert scale was used ranging from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. Third part focuses on level of agreement of customers with the key attributes of fine dining restaurants and their post-dining behavior intentions whereas the last part inquired the demographic and personal information of the respondent.

Data Analysis

The findings and analysis for the fine dining restaurant has been mentioned here in this part of the chapter.

Table 1 Correlation between Food Quality Attributes and Overall Satisfaction

Overall Satisfaction		Food Quality Attributes			
		Food portion size	Temperature and taste of food	Availability of Alcoholic Beverages	Menu Variety
Overall satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.373**	.584**	.284**	.566**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	178	178	178	178

Interpretation: The correlation between Overall satisfaction and Food attributes (Food portion size $r = .373$, $p < .001$, Temperature and Taste of food $r = .584$, $p < .001$, Availability of alcoholic beverages $r = .284$, $p < .001$ and Menu Variety $r = .566$, $p < .001$) is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the Food attributes improves, so does the satisfaction levels of customers.

The correlation of overall satisfaction with respect to Temperature and Taste of food ($r = .584$, $p < .001$) and Menu Variety ($r = .566$, $p < .001$) is higher compared to the other factors.

Table 2 Correlation between Service Quality Attributes and Overall Satisfaction

Overall Satisfaction		Service Quality Attributes		
		Helpfulness and Politeness of staff	Timeliness of service	The adequacy of staff and their grooming reflects an upscale image
Overall satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.672**	.669**	.531**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	178	178	178

Interpretation: The correlation between Overall satisfaction and Service Quality attributes (Helpfulness and Politeness of staff $r = .672$, $p < .001$, Timeliness of Service $r = .669$, $p < .001$, and Adequacy of staff and their grooming skills $r = .531$, $p < .001$) is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the Service Quality attributes improves, so does the satisfaction levels of customers.

Table 3 Correlation between Overall Ambience Attributes and Overall Satisfaction

Overall Satisfaction		Overall Ambience Attributes		
		Comfortable and welcoming feeling	Availability and Cleanliness of washrooms	The fine dining restaurant has an upscale restaurant reputation
Overall satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.545**	.491**	.516**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	178	178	178

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Interpretation: The correlation between Overall satisfaction and ambience attributes (Comfortable and welcoming feeling $r = .545$, $p < .001$, Availability and Cleanliness of washrooms $r = .491$, $p < .001$, and Upscale restaurant reputation $r = .516$, $p < .001$) is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the ambience attributes improves, so does the satisfaction levels of customers. The correlation of overall satisfaction with respect to Comfortable and welcoming feeling ($r = .545$, $p < .001$) is higher compared to the other factors.

Table 4 Correlation between Overall Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions (recommendation to others)

Overall Satisfaction		I shall be highly recommending this restaurant to my family and friends
Overall satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.605**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	178

Interpretation: The correlation between Overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Recommending to others $r = .605$, $p < .001$) is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the overall satisfaction increases, so does the post dining behavioral intentions of customers like recommending the restaurant to friends and families also increases. Higher the satisfaction level, higher the chances of diners recommending the restaurant to others.

Table 5 Correlation between Overall Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions (Going to be a frequent visitor)

Overall Satisfaction		I am going to be a frequent visitor to this restaurant in the near future
Overall satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.608**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	178

Interpretation: The correlation between Overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Going to be a frequent visitor $r = .608$, $p < .001$) is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the overall satisfaction increases, so does the post dining behavioral intentions of customers like visiting the restaurant again also increases. Higher the customer satisfaction level, higher the chances of diners visiting the restaurant again.

Table 6 Analysis of Variance for Overall satisfaction and Restaurant Recommendation by frequency of visit

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Overall satisfaction	Between Groups	9.392	3	3.131	5.973	.001
I shall be highly recommending this restaurant to my family and friends	Between Groups	15.166	3	5.055	6.033	.001

Interpretation: The results from the analysis indicate that the frequency of visit has a significant effect on the overall satisfaction levels of the customers, $F(3, 174) = 5.97, p < .001$ and restaurant recommendation to family and friends, $F(3, 174) = 6.03, p < .001$.

Table 7 Post Hoc Tests (Tukey HSD) for Overall satisfaction with respect to frequency of visit

How often do you dine at this fine dining restaurant		N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
			1	2
dimension1	Once in six months	24	3.83	
	First time	11	4.00	4.00
	Once in three months	68	4.21	4.21
	Once a month	75		4.49
	Sig.		.269	.080

Interpretation: The mean values for the three frequency categories indicate that as the frequency of visit increases (once in six months to once a month), so did the overall satisfaction levels of the customers (once a six month: $M = 3.83$; once in three months: $M = 4.21$; once in a month: $M = 4.49$). To test the differences between the three frequency categories, post hoc comparison technique was used. The results indicate that the overall satisfaction levels of customers who visit once in six months is significantly different from the overall satisfaction levels of customers who visits once in a month. These results show that the overall difference in the customer satisfaction with respect to the three categories of frequency of visiting the restaurant is due to significantly greater amount of overall satisfaction levels of the customers who visits the restaurant once in a month

Table 8 Post Hoc Tests (Tukey HSD) for Restaurant Recommendation with respect to frequency of visit

How often do you dine at this fine dining restaurant		N	Subset for alpha = 0.05	
			1	2
dimension1	Once in six months	24	3.42	
	Once in three months	68	4.09	4.09
	First time	11		4.27
	Once a month	75		4.32
	Sig.		.051	.808

Interpretation: The results from the analysis indicate that the frequency of visit has a significant effect on the behavioral intentions of the customers, $F(3, 174) = 6.03, p < .05$. The mean values for the three frequency categories indicate that increase in the frequency of visit (once in six months to once a month), has a positive impact on the behavioral intentions of the customers (once in six month: $M = 3.42$; once in three months: $M = 4.09$; once in a month: $M = 4.32$).

To test the differences between the three frequency categories, post hoc comparison technique was used. The results indicate that the behavioral intentions of the customers who visit once in six months is significantly different from both the behavioral intention levels of customers who visits once in three months and once in a month. These results show that the overall difference in the behavioral intention levels with respect to the three categories of frequency of visiting the restaurant is due to significantly greater amount of overall satisfaction levels of the customers who visits the restaurant more often.

Table 9 Correlation between Overall Satisfaction, Post Dining Behavioral Intentions and Availability of Alcohol

		Overall satisfaction	I shall be highly recommending this restaurant to my family and friends	I am going to be a frequent visitor to this restaurant in the near future
Availability of Alcoholic Beverages	Pearson Correlation	.284**	.181*	.229**

Interpretation: The correlation between Overall satisfaction, Post dining behavioral intentions and availability of alcohol (Overall Satisfaction $r = .284, p < .001$, Intention of recommending $r = .181, p < .001$, and Going to be a frequent visitor $r = .229, p < .001$) is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the availability of alcohol improves

so does the satisfaction levels of customers. Also the probability of customers revisiting a restaurant and recommending it to their friends and families increases with increase in availability of alcohol.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1: To test whether significant relationship exist between customer satisfaction and perceived quality attributes, i.e., food attributes, service quality attributes and atmospheric quality attributes, correlation test is applied between overall customer satisfaction and the three quality attributes.

Conclusion: There is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is significant linear relationship between 1. Customer Satisfaction and food quality attributes; 2.Customer satisfaction and Service quality Attributes; and 3. Customer satisfaction and Atmospheric Quality attributes of fine dining restaurants.

Decision: Reject the Null Hypothesis

Hypothesis 2:To test whether significant relationship exist between customer satisfaction and post dining behavioral intentions, i.e., recommending to others and going to be frequent visitor, correlation test is applied between overall customer satisfaction and the two post dining behavioral intentions of fine dining restaurants.

Conclusion: There is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is significant linear relationship between Overall Customer satisfaction and Post dining behavioral intentions of diners of fine dining restaurants, i.e. recommending to others and going to be a frequent visitor.

Decision: Reject the Null Hypothesis

Findings

a. Respondent profile:

The respondent profile analysis in the present study indicated that the market segment of the fine dining restaurant is dominated by working class people and students. Majority of the respondents belong to the age group 25 to 35 years of age. 52.8% of the respondents were unmarried. Most of the customers are frequent visitors to the restaurant and come to the fine dining restaurant for mostly a convenient meal or try signature menu items.

The analysis also indicates that with increase in age, the frequency of respondents visiting a fine dining restaurant increases till the age of 50 years and the frequency of the customers is highest in the age category 36 to 50 years.

Customers usually spend between Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000 per meal. The large majority heard about the fine dining restaurant through friends and families. Surprisingly, for sources of information the advertising through newspapers, radio and hoarding combined accounted

for only 9.4%. These low percentages imply that the restaurants should focus more on service quality attributes over advertisements.

b. Relationship between amount spent and behavioral intentions of diners of fine dining restaurant:

The ANOVA results indicate that the behavioral intentions of the customers who spend amount in the range of Rs. 1001- 2000 is significantly different from both the customers who spend amount less than Rs. 500 and in the range of Rs. 500- 1000. These results show that the post meal behavioral intention levels has a positive impact with increase in the amount spend on a meal till a limit, i.e. Rs. 2000, after which there is no significant relation between the post meal behavioral intention levels and the amount spend.

c. Relationship between customer satisfaction and service quality attributes of fine dining restaurant:

The findings suggest that the service quality attributes are the most important and the driving factor contributing in high customer satisfaction and thereby positively affecting the customers' post dining behavioral intentions. This is evident from the correlation test performed between Overall satisfaction and Service Quality attributes (Helpfulness and Politeness of staff $r = .672$, $p < .001$, Timeliness of Service $r = .669$, $p < .001$, and Adequacy of staff and their grooming skills $r = .531$, $p < .001$). The value for correlation between overall satisfaction and ambience attributes and overall satisfaction and food quality attributes are lower compared to the service quality attributes but still positive and significant by which it can be concluded that all three attributes namely service quality, food quality and atmosphere are important determinants of customer satisfaction and behavioral intention of patrons Customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between the key service attributes and behavioral intentions. . Hence, restaurateurs are advised to place emphasis on the said three attributes in order to attract new customers whilst retaining the current customers.

d. Relation between Customer satisfaction level and Post dining Behavioral Intentions:

The ANOVA results indicate that the satisfaction levels as well as behavioral intentions of customers whose purpose of visit is to try signature menu items is significantly high compared to other purposes like visiting for work or by invitation. These results show that the overall difference in the behavioral intention levels with respect to the four categories of purpose of visiting the restaurant is due to significantly greater amount of overall satisfaction levels of the customers who visits the restaurant to try signature menu item.

An attempt was made to see if there is any correlation between Overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions and it was found that Overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions

(Recommending to others $r = .605$, $p < .001$) is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the overall satisfaction increases, so does the post dining behavioral intentions of customers like recommending the restaurant to friends and families also increases. Higher the satisfaction level, higher the chances of diners recommending the restaurant to others.

e. Relation between Customer satisfaction level, Post dining Behavioral Intentions and Availability of Alcohol:

An attempt was made to see if there is any relationship between availability of alcohol and customer satisfaction and their post dining behavioral intentions. The correlation between Overall satisfaction, Post dining behavioral intentions and availability of alcohol is positive and statistically significant. This means that as the availability of alcohol improves so does the satisfaction levels of customers. Also the probability of customers revisiting a restaurant and recommending it to their friends and families increases with increase in availability of alcohol.

Conclusion

The result indicates that service quality attributes and overall ambience attributes are the strong pillars that hold the reputation and image of fine dining restaurants. In order for a fine dining restaurant to flourish, it is important for the staff to focus on their service as they greatly influence the customers' experience of fine dining, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The study also highlights the importance of timeliness of service as an important service quality attribute that contribute in customer satisfaction. Customers visit restaurants mainly on recommendations of friends and family. People who recommend restaurants are the one who themselves are frequent visitors to the said place. They are the one who frequently visit the restaurants they are loyal to. Restaurant loyalty is one of the most important competitive survival tools for fine dining restaurants because loyal customers provide repeat business, referrals, and competitive advantages. The study highlights the importance of certain factors like menu variety, timeliness of service and comfortable and welcoming feeling as few of the most important factors contributing to overall customer satisfaction in fine dining restaurants.

The study will facilitate restaurant managers to understand the customers' expectations from a fine dining restaurant and how by focusing on the service and ambience attributes, they can gain competitive advantage. Also the study highlights the importance of word of mouth publicity and how by focusing on service rather than advertisements, the restaurant can attract more customers.

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