

Business ethics and the fast food industry



Ethics is the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group. It is the study of morality. This paper is research based on ethnographic study conducted in one of the outlets of “ Burger King” an American based fast food company with over 12000 outlets across 73 countries. This paper includes observations that were made in one of its outlets, interviewing some of its employees, and also includes inputs given by some chosen customers. Once all these recordings were made, the aim was to relate our findings to identify if this company is ethical in its practices.

I visited Burger King Outlet in M. L Hampstead, which was pretty spacious, with about sixty seating capacity. Out of which forty were lower seats, 10 high chairs and the also had some 10 chairs specially meant for kids. Considering the crowd it seems to be enough seating facility, but during peak hours that is between twelve to three in the noon its bit difficult to get seats. Nether There neither is a specific smoking zone inside the burger king nor is it allowed in burger king.

The shop is handicap friendly all the parts of store are wheel chair accessible, the doors can be opened pressing the button sitting on a wheel chair. Toilets specially meant for handicaps are facilitated.

They have toy cars in which children can sit and play, it is a special attraction for children. parents bring children because of this reason. It costs fifty pens for ten mins ride. They also give free toy pack with kid’s meal which cost 2. 99 pounds.

They don’t have any discount like student discount or any other discount targeting specific section of customers but they have offers like buy one get

one free which is applicable for any sandwiches, except sandwiches it's not applicable to any other items .

I found that many people asking for specific type of burger called whopper burger which coast 3. 79 pounds. Other than this more customers opted fizzy drinks these two items seems to be very famous with burger king.

I also noticed that only few people opted for take away like 20% but maximum about 80% of customers opted to eat in. one more thing I observed that from 12 to 3 in noon it is peak hours and for every ten minutes we can expect 30 to 40 costumers . so at that time six service staff were attending customers in the front desk but on other times in off pick hours there will be around 15 to 20 customers in a span of 10 minutes , so there will be 3 to 4 service staff in front.

I interacted with staff and tried to collect some data. They were very friendly and cooperative and were generous to give following information

They told that, there were 30 people working in that particular burger king . out of that 24 were male 16 female . In that 6 of 24 male staff were designated as shift mangers, 3 out of 6 female staff were also shift managers and there was only one branch manager. Expect this 10 members all other were service staff and they were paid 5. 80 pounds per hour and shift managers were paid 6. 20 pounds per hour and branch manager was paid a fixed monthly salary. They were allowed to take 40 days of paid sick leave others than this they didn't had any special comforts or benefits, and employees were given permission to have food worth 50 pens per hour. And

they were paid 50 percent extra salary when they work during bank holidays and festival holidays .

The staff was really diverse which include people from all ethnicity, out of which 10 were student working part time and remaining were working full time. They said they prepare a burger within 30 sec n they don't take more than 2 min to serve a customer, whatever may be the order.

As far as customer concerned majority of them were middle aged, compared to young or old people and there were more female customer than male.

When I spoke to some of the young customer I came to know that that rates in burger were bit costlier compared McDonalds, KFC and its other competitors and hence less in number of younger crowd. Majority of customer were very polite in the behavior but sometimes young customers behave very rudely, they even use abusive words and even through the burger if some minor mistake is happened while serving this young customers.

Unlike McDonalds and star bucks, in burger king I didn't see them collecting money for any kind charity work, nether I saw any information regarding burger king charity connection.

Ethics, which often called as moral philosophy is not easily defined and philosophers offer contradictory explanations of it. It is a subject which includes discussions about how we should live, what is right? What is wrong? And what we mean? To get an idea of ethics, its important to have a look at these questions:

Are some of the things always wrong, If so what are those?, or does it defer on the point of view or even situation?

How to measure goodness and badness?

Are all humans selfish?

Are really some people “ better” at morality than others, or is everyone equally capable of being good?

Why should you be good?

Is Ethics a special type of knowledge? If it is so what sort of knowledge is it and how do we get it?

Dose morality means obeying a set of rules?

If people say, “ I know cheating is wrong”, do they know it is wrong or simply believe it very strongly?

Are moral laws the same as societies laws?

This means, ethics covers a wide range of topics. The answers for these questions are hotly debated for hundreds of years and are still debated today. They affect every aspect of the way we live. They cover even issues such as whether we should pay our taxes or not and even how we treat our pets.

There are two different kinds of ethics: Ethical theory and Practical ethics. Ethical theory examines the various philosophies, systems, ideas or principles used in making judgments about right/wrong/good/bad things.

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Practical ethics is more focuses on subjects that always invite ethical questioning such as is it is right to have an abortion or help someone who is terminally ill. No doubt these two things are related. The theory we use influences the decisions on every particular moral issue. For example, one who believes in a set of principles which states that life is sacred and no one can ever take it. This principle may lead him to think against capital punishment. So the ethical theory leads him to a view about the moral issue (the death penalty).

Before we proceed, some definitions should not go amiss. Ethics comes from the Greek word ethikos which in its root form (ethos) means character or custom. For the Greeks it refereed to the appropriate or customary way to behave in society.

Morality is derived from the Latin word Moralis and is concerned with which actions are right and which or actions are wrong, rather than the character of the person. Today the two terms are often used interchangeably.

Business ethics concentrates on the moral standards applicable to business policies, institutions, and their behavior. In other words, is a form of applied or practical ethics. It includes not only the analysis of moral norms and values, but also attempts to apply the conclusions of this analysis to that assortment of institutions, technologies, transactions, activities, and pursuits that we call business.

Business ethics investigates three different kinds of issues: systemic, corporate, and individual. Systemic issues in business ethics are ethical questions raised about the economic, legal, political and other social systems

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within which the businesses operate. Corporate issues in business ethics are ethical questions raised about a particular company. Individual issues in business ethics are ethical questions raised about a particular individual or an individuals within a company.

The multinationals operating in more than one country creates ethical dilemmas for their managers that managers of a firm limited to a single country may not face.

The ability to shift its operations from one country to another enables the multinational to escape the social controls that a single nation might attempt to impose and can allow the multinational to play one country against another country.

It can even sometimes transfer goods, raw materials and capital among its plants in different countries which enables it to escape fiscal obligations and even taxes that companies operating in a single nation forced to bear.

They often get the opportunity to transfer a new technology or set of products from a more developed world to nations that are less developed.

It is often faced with the dilemma of deciding which of these different norms and standards to implement in its operations.

Ethical relativism is the view which states that there are no ethical standards that are absolutely true and that can be applicable to the companies and people of all societies. Thus, the theory of ethical relativism implies that whatever the majority in our society believes about morality can be considered automatically correct.

Utilitarianism is a term for a view which holds that actions and policies can be evaluated on the basis of benefits and costs they will impose on society. usually business analysts think that the best way to evaluate the ethical propriety of a business decision – or any other decision – is by relying on utilitarian

Justice and Fairness

Issues involving justice and fairness are usually divided into three categories:

Distributive justice is concerned about the fair distribution of society's benefits and burdens.

Retributive justice refers to the imposition of punishments and penalties on those commit wrong deeds.

Compensatory justice deals the best possible way of compensating people who were wronged by others.

Least Harm

This deals with condition where neither choice are beneficial. In such case, a person can choose least harm possible option and which harms the fewest people. One should also sensibly argue that people have superior responsibility to “do no harm” than to take steps benefiting others. For example, a person has a greater responsibility to simply walk past a person rather than to hit a person as they walk past with no specific reason.

Rights

In the rights ethical theory the rights accepted by a society are protected and given the highest priority. Rights are considered to be ethical since a

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large population endorses them. Individuals may also confer rights upon others if they have the capability and resources to do so (1). For example, a person may say that his friend may borrow the car for a day. The friend who was given the ability to borrow the car is now having the right of the car for the day.

Based on the theories and utilitarianism which explains ethics based on benefits and cost though burger king charging more than other counterparts like Mc Donald's and K. F. C, people thought, it worth paying and liked the quality, thus it seems to be ethical as for as the pricing is concerned. But some also thought its pricing was expensive especially the youngsters and many avoided Berger king and rather preferred other options. With there prospective it may be unethical pricing. .

As for as employee rights are concerned burger king is paying the minimum pay directed by the government. Though it seems to be nothing wrong legally but when charging more than all its counterparts it seems to be unethical to stick to bottom of the payment scale, when it come to paying its employees. And in case of Mc Donald's, there rival brand they had some special schemes for its employees through corporate tie ups, but any such facilities are missing in case of burger king, says the employee. But burger king employee are happy that unlike many other fast food companies it allows its employees to have food. Food they can have is like 50 pens worth per hour, but it seems to be unethical seeing the pricing of its food items, it should be sensible and ethical if they try to increase this. And it cannot be uneconomical considering the fact that only 5to 10 employees work in most of its outlets at a time, Thus it doesn't make huge impact to its revenues.

Seeing the fact that all of its outlets are disabled friendly it seems to be an ethical practice, but they might be doing it for compulsion since it is mandatory under law.

Further opinion regarding being disabled friendly can be given only if we can come to know whether they are having similar practice in countries where its not a compulsion under law.

They do have facilities for entertaining the kids, but they are charging for it so it hard to categories it has a act of social concern or a commercial one. But they are also giving some gifts along with kiddy meal, again this can be considered a marketing activity. They doesn't even have student or any kind of discounts which again doesn't really come under ethics , it could have been considered as a mere promotional activity , even if they were having.

One thing that really needs a mention, is its diversified staff which included all kind of people from different ethnicities, male female and students and had both part timers and full timers. The staff were very friendly and polite they treated every one in a same way the did not do any differentiation based on race, color, religion and ethnicity. There was no gender bias they treated every one the same even when some young costumers behaved very rudely they were trained to be very polite.

From some of its behavior it brings a notion that it is very ethical and socially responsible. but its might not be totally true because many of these acts may be carried out of legal compulsion and some time even because of business compulsions, but one good thing, which need to be mentioned is that, its not involved in any notable un ethical behaviors. The topic of ethics <https://assignbuster.com/business-ethics-and-the-fast-food-industry/>

itself is a debatable subject in every step. So on this topic it hard to decide or conclude whether the Burger king is ethical or not. And its might be the case of many other companies

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