

Customer's needs

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Student's Reflections The XYZ Coffee House have always placed great emphasis on providing customer needs. Some of us go to work at the Coffee House everyday without realising that each action directly or indirectly affects customers level of satisfaction. Customer's needs include giving prompt service, having a good meal, the right ambience, friendly as well as knowledgeable waiters and the list goes on. During my one month training in this department, I have gathered some factors that contribute to satisfying customer needs. Ambience

This is an important aspect in contributing to customer's needs. Most customer choose a place to dine based on the environment of the restaurant. The decor must not be too intimidating or too plain, air-conditioning must be just at the right temperature (at CG it is 25 - 27 degrees Celsius), suitable background music and furniture arrangement that provide comfortable space for guest movement. These are only some of the examples that provide the best ambience for the customer. At one time during the pre-service briefing, the issue of air conditioning came up.

It seems that the day before a customer complaint that the air con in the Coffee House was not strong causing him to sweat while eating his Asam Laksa. As a result he did not have an enjoyable meal and stormed off angrily from the place refusing to pay the bill. Obviously one needs to feel at ease when dining and if the restaurant fails to see to this, they will lose many customers in the future. Knowledge " Knowledge, without practice, makes but half an artist". While doing my training in this outlet, I have learnt the importance of gathering information.

You might never know when a guest would come to you and ask " What time does the gym close? " or " How far is Kuala Lumpur from here? " and general questions such as " Where is the best place to shop in KL? ". As a guest in a foreign country they would definitely want to find out more about the place they are visiting and what better way to do so by asking the locals. The waiting staff should be able to answer to any of the guest queries promptly and without any difficulties at all. I believe that one factor in providing to customer needs also includes being the " walking directory/info guide" to them as well.

Language One of the basic tool to satisfy customer needs is to be in the same wavelength as your guest. Language barriers are among the common disability a waiter can have in order to fulfill guest satisfaction. From my experience and observation in XYZ Coffee House, I have found that it is essential to be fluent in the language that the customer understands most. For instance, if it were a Japanese patron, the waiter's ability to converse in Japanese makes order taking much more easier and less stressful.

As for the guest, speaking in his own language will make him feel more comfortable as he will be able to tell what exactly that he needs to the waiter. This also creates a more friendly atmosphere for the guest and make their dining experience more enjoyable. It is also widely known that the Japanese prefer conversing in their own mother tongue than other language. Likewise, I noticed that the waiters here took the initiative to learn up Dutch language as the hotel do receive many Dutch guest from KLM. Most of these

guest have praised the waiters at XYZ Coffee House for their ability to speak in their language.

As a result they enjoy the company of the employees in this hotel and always look forward to return as a regular guest. Social skills My own definition of an effective social skill is the ability to put a smile on the guest's face as they leave the restaurant. This is declaration that they had a satisfying experience dining with us. In order to achieve this I gathered that we must be familiar with their personality, know their likes or dislikes and anticipate their needs. There was a time during my training in this department, when Rachel, my Station Captain noticed an elderly lady preparing to take her medication after having her meal.

She offered the elderly lady a glass of plain warm water as she was about to take her pills. Rachel was able to anticipate her need even before she asked for the glass of water to swallow the pills. This is a fine example of going the 'extra mile' for the guest. Social skills also include having a small chat with the guests. This gives opportunity for the guest to point out what they liked or disliked about their meal. I once asked a guest whether the food that he ordered was satisfactory as I always practice this during my practical in the training restaurant at Sunway College.

By asking " Are you enjoying your sirloin steak so far, sir? ", the guest took the chance to say that the steak was cooked too raw. With that, I offered to send it back to the kitchen to have it cooked to the guest's satisfaction. I believe this has prevented the restaurant from receiving a complaint and perhaps encourage the guest to return in the near future. SOPs All service

personnel must familiarise with the SOPs in order to deliver consistency to the guests. SOPs provide guidelines for its staff to serve guests according to the standards of the hotel. With that only can the employees provide satisfaction to the customer.

SERVING ICED WATER 1. Iced water is served when guest request for it. 2. The water goblet must always be refilled form time to time (Extracted from XYZ Coffee House Operations Manual) At the terrace area of the XYZ Coffee House, there is a constant request for iced water from the guest especially the westerners. Due to the humid weather of our country, they are always alerting the waiting staff here to refill their glasses. Without waiting for their signal, the waiter should be able to observe whether the guest needs their glass to be refilled or not as it is part of the SOP. DUTIES DURING SERVICE 1.

Change ashtray whenever there are two or more cigarette buds. (Extracted from XYZ Coffee House Operations Manual) This procedure satisfies the need ofsmokingguests dining at the restaurant. I observed that too many cigarette buds on the ashtray result in the ashes flying to the guest's plate. This is not good for the guest as they might swallow the unwanted particles that fell on the food. Furthermore, an ashtray with many cigarette buds project an unattractive table display in the eyes of the guest. Therefore, to provide a satisfying meal for the smoking guests, the restaurant has implemented this procedure.

CLEARING 1. Always excuse yourself before clearing. 2. Ask the guest if they have finished their meal. (Extracted from XYZ Coffee House Operations Manual) The purpose of establishing the procedure above is to ensure that

the guest is aware that the waiter is going to clear his plate. On several occasions I noticed that the staff here forget to practice this and it ended making the guest irritated as they have not finish what they had on the plate yet. In the end, they will not be satisfied with the service of the staff. Speed It is a well known fact that most guest do not like to wait too long to be served.

An efficient waiter should be able to deliver the order promptly and prepare themselves for the next course to be served to avoid complaints of slow service and such. I believe that a hungry guest or a patron rushing for an appointment will definitely appreciate the fast service that was delivered. However, I realised that sometimes it is not the service staff's fault that the food is served slow but the kitchen's inefficiency in preparing the meal. Therefore, the service staff should inform the guest before hand on how long to expect their meals to arrive.

That way the guest would not be too disappointed or blame the restaurant for its slow service. Guest Comment Card The Guest Comment Card is one way to measure satisfaction level as it provides feedback from the customer. It provides information to the staff on how to improve their service better and provide greater satisfaction to the guest the next time. On a different note, the card also makes the customer feel appreciated. By writing down their comments, it allows them to perceive that the hotel does value their opinion. Furthermore, if it was a good comment, the hotel will sure be recommended by the guest through word of mouth.

This eventually generates more customers for the hotel in the future. TIPS I once read somewhere that the full term for TIPS is To Insure Prompt Service. The western culture practice in giving tips personally to the waiting staff and always feel obligated to do this every time they dine out. (" Tips on tipping", Daniel Rogov; [http://www. stratsplace. com/rogov/tips_on_tipping. html](http://www.stratsplace.com/rogov/tips_on_tipping.html)) I noticed some of the staff here were greatly motivated by tips that it brought about an obvious difference between serving a Caucasian and a local guest.

This should not be the situation as all guest regardless of where they are from should be treated equally. However, I believe that receiving tips from the guest is not a crime if it does motivate them to provide the highest level of satisfaction to customer needs. After going through my training in this outlet, I have found how essential it is to provide customer's needs. I would say that it is a chain reaction as one satisfied guest generates future potential customers to the hotel. Therefore, satisfying every patron's needs should be a top priority.