Design and atmosphere in customer expectations about restaurants

What defines a good restaurant? A good location, wide variety of food offered and prices certainly are crucial factors but the best food in town won't help a restaurant out if the ambience is just not right and customers don't feel comfortable. Some like it entertaining and lively, others prefer quieter atmospheres. Perfect Design can't promise a charming atmosphere but can sometimes even seem boring. In this study different categories of restaurants will be identified, combined with an empirical research using three restaurants of different categories. Every important aspects of atmosphere creation will be explained and recommendations will be given.

1 Introduction and statement of relevance

Aims of the BBA Thesis

The aim of this Thesis is to identify the special aspects of customer satisfaction and analyze the importance of design and atmosphere in a hospitality establishment, specifically in a restaurant environment. It will examine whether or not design is an important factor shaping customer expectations about a restaurant. Different techniques of interior design and atmosphere creation will be identified such as usage of colors, lighting, use of smells and music. Further the thesis will explore successful design concepts in the Hospitality industry. The human senses that can be stimulated by design will be discussed and the therefore created emotions and their possible benefits to the hospitality industry identified. It will show how ambience affects consumer behavior and whether it can serve as a critical factor in determining the success or failure of a business. The thesis will also include examples of such successful design concepts.

Analytical Procedure

Publications will be studied and used to give an understanding of the term design, in relation to ambience creation. Different techniques and terms of design will be explained with the help of several publications provided in the list of resources. After giving the overall understanding of the given topic, the actual research analysis begins. Using the website www. onlineumfragen. com, an online questionnaire was designed, featuring pictures of three restaurants of different design categories. First there are questions about the overall design and atmosphere aspects of each individual restaurant (named Restaurant A, B and C in the questionnaires). Later the respondents will be asked to choose one of the three to plan a special event (e. g. their birthday) at. Choosing to conduct the survey online gave the opportunity to define a population using networks such as " Facebook" (www. facebook. com). A group was created on April 22nd 2010 and 1427 people were invited to join the group and kindly asked to complete the survey. After a week, the group was closed on April 29th. By then 201 people took part in the survey. After defining the relevance of design as a factor in customer expectations about a restaurant and how it therefore affects satisfaction by the example of three restaurants, the paper will give recommendations to enhance customer satisfaction and then conclude on the findings that were determined by the study.

Restaurant Design

In past times Interior Architecture or Interior Fitting described the very same process but the term Design became much more appropriate in today's world. Besides planning and handcraft Design involves intention and

craftiness. Restaurant Design requires experience and precise know-how. Looking at the industry one realizes that there is a lot of competition in an immense marketplace. Chances of surviving challenges like an economic crises or even just a change to a new trend seem very low nowadays.

According to Kotler (1983) the field of Marketing Research identified the importance of design and atmosphere in restaurants. The meaning of the " total product" gained importance, meaning the Restaurant and everything that comes with it. The tangible product, meaning the food and beverage aspect of the Restaurant play a minimal role in the buying decision of the customer. Kotler even claims that in some cases the atmosphere alone influences the buying decision the most.

Design creates a new world of experiences

In any given situation, whether in an upscale restaurant, in a dining car of a train, a simple tavern on the countryside, the guest should always be the center of attention. In any successful business t is essential to care about the customer and try to fulfill his or her needs by all means. Especially in today's world, consumers are looking for change and want to get away from it all. This also means that it is not sufficient anymore to count on having a renowned chef and excellent food in your restaurant anymore. It is more and more necessary to distinguish your restaurant through first-class service and create that special atmosphere in which guests will feel comfortable and the more will be animated to consume.

It takes much more than simply changing the color of the walls, putting up new curtains, changing the lights, buying new tableware or furniture when

planning and designing a restaurant. The architecture and the design of the actual space create the stage for the play, in which the idea and concept of the owner or designer have to be visually translated to the guests. The challenge here is to prepare guests for a culinary experience. This can be achieved through the right use of colors, materials and lightning to stimulate all five senses and thus prepare for consumption and pleasure.

Significance of design and atmosphere in Restaurants

Eating out has become as much a lifestyle choice and form of entertainment as a source of nourishment. (Ryder, 2007)

The 7th P of Marketing and the 5 Senses of Man

The 4Ps of Marketing (Product, Price, Place and Promotion) have for a long-time counted as the Marketing classics. When looking at the Marketing Mix of a service we shall add three more Ps. These are: People, Process, and Physical evidence.

People in this case simply means " Staff should have the appropriate interpersonal skills, attitude, and service knowledge to provide the service that consumers are paying for" (Service Marketing Mix: The 7P's).

Process refers to the systems used to assist the organization in delivering the services.

More important in this study though is the last of the Ps: Physical evidence.

" Physical Evidence is the element of the service mix, which allows the consumer again to make judgments on the organization. If you walk into a

restaurant your expectations are of a clean, friendly environment. On an aircraft if you travel first class you expect enough room to be able to lie down! Physical evidence is an essential ingredient of the service mix, consumers will make perceptions based on their sight of the service provision which will have an impact on the organizations perceptual plan of the service." (Service Marketing Mix: The 7P's)

Now besides this crucial 7 Ps, there are also the " 5 S" that are of importance here. In other words, it the 5 senses of man play a fundamental role in the buyer's decision-making process. Man gathers all information through his environment. We experience our surroundings through our senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Since Man is exposed to a stimulus satiation by today's industry, the sense of sight evolved as main criteria for perception of the surrounding environment.

The sense of sight

The sense of sight is the most dominant of senses in today's times. 70 to 80% of our perception is influenced by the sense of sight (Sehsinn). The human sense of sight can and should be stimulated in many ways by gastronomy. The interior furnishing, the color schemes, the lightning techniques, various design contrasts, the cleanliness of the establishment and even the appearance of the staff are significant aspects that can determine the success or failure of a business. All these factors also help to create a lasting image of the establishment in the customers mind, and can therefore result in to a customer that will return and recommend the restaurant to friends. If these aspects fail to stimulate the sense positively, the customer is sure not to return.

The sense of hearing

The sense of hearing allows Man to experience sound, noise and words and is fully developed already 4 to 5 month prior to birth (Senses, 2007). In Gastronomy there are multiple ways to stimulate this sense, on one hand there is the background music that is often used to create a certain ambience. Conversations among guests or staff or even between guest and staff and also noise that comes out of the kitchen can function as a stimulus. The soundscape should be lively, but not too loud and definitely not too silent. The acoustics can be well directed by means of carpets, sound absorbing materials, tablecloths and other décor. Depending on what kind of atmosphere one would want to create, the choice of music is another crucial factor. A line must be drawn between establishments like the newest In-restaurant in New York City and that charming Brasserie in Paris Saint Germain. One could say there lie worlds between the two and this must also be implemented when choosing the music. In General one can say that the younger Generation is used to louder sound than the older, but in most hip restaurants in New York, the music is so loud there is barely any talking. Now imagine that soundscape in the charming Brasserie in Paris. So when making the choice about music volume one should consider the mean between the target groups and also not forget to adapt to the type of image and ambience one would want to transmit to the clients.

The sense of taste

The sense of taste is the least developed of all senses. Due to the fact that Man can only distinguish between 5 tastes it is almost unbelievable how a sense like that can determine our quality of life and joy for life to that

extend. The older we get, the less we taste. A newborn child has about 10. 000 taste buds, whereas adults only have 5. 000 on average. (Senses, 2007) Man can only taste four qualities. These are: sweet, sour, bitter and salty. Other tastes are tasted through smelling, either through the nose or through the mouth and throat.

The sense of taste is undoubtly the one of the most important factor for customer retention, but not anymore the most important in gastronomy. The menu and the quality of the food are factors that can determine the success of a business. If the food is good, the guests are more likely to turn a blind eye on shortcomings in the design and atmosphere. The optimum and everyone's promise to glory and success is a good combination of the both, since customers are willing to consume more and with more pleasure if the right ambience is created around them. (Ryder, 2007)

The sense of smell

" A designer who creates objects and spaces engages our sensations of touch, sight, and sometimes hearing. But what of our noses? Despite olfaction's unmatched ability to evince memories and emotions-two essential objectives of design-smell is a relatively untapped medium in design practice." (Black, 2010)

In gastronomy there are ways to market services through smell. The appetizingly smell of fresh prepared food, freshly brewed coffee, baked bred or even the smell of flowers can stimulate the sense of smell and therefore put the guests in a consumption mood. Strong body odor of staff or disturbing smells of the kitchen should be avoided as guests will feel

disturbed and their appetite will probably be " gone with the smell". Eva Wisten (2010) even goes so far as to claim that scent itself can be decribed as a form of design. " All of the categories and critical tools we normally apply to design can also be applied to scent, from the recognition of a balance between means and goals, to the different degrees of engagement with the rest of the world." (WISTEN, 2010)

Wisten further explains in her article that scent is already being used widely as a design element. " Manufacturers seem to be reaching a tipping point of awareness that scent is important in creating a total " brand experience." For example, casinos, hotels, private clubs, new automobiles are often designed with signature scents." (WISTEN, 2010)

Scent can play a more emotional, expressive, and even functional role in our daily lives. Since Man's associations with scent are incredibly strong and cognitively bonded with memory and prior experiences, scents might open up new ways to learn and remember. " Becoming more alive to scents will also add texture, depth, and richness to our everyday experiences, if we can find ways to incorporate them that move beyond air fresheners and analogs of natural scents." (WISTEN, 2010)

Also, a scent can be used to " tag" objects and places and accordingly build associations and habits. According to Wisten (2010) it would therefore enable customer retention on a brand new level. (Black, 2010)

The sense of touch

Unfortunately the importance of the sense of touch is often underestimated in tourism. When exploring their surrounding, people like to look, taste, hear

and smell but they also explore by touching the materials and even enjoy touching pleasant materials. A soft blanket in a Hotel room or comfortable chairs in a restaurant are factors that also determine a nice atmosphere. As mentioned above, the choice of materials is also important not only to the eye but even more so to the sense of touch. (Ã-ller, 2009)

The science of colors

" Color. A characteristic of light or of surfaces or object that is perceptible to human vision and that is described by various color names, such as red or blue." (Pile, 1997)

Colors stimulate all our senses; they are linked to our subconscious knowledge and memories and therefore create certain associations (Stadler, 2010).

People try to flee the routine, to relax from the daily stress and to regenerate, but to be able to do so the atmosphere as to be right. Using colors, designers can stimulate the senses and therefore create moods or create different and completely new atmosphere (Stadler, 2010) It doesn't necessarily mean that everything has to be as colorful as it gets, but putting the right contrasts or accents and harmonizing design elements already does the trick. In other words extreme unity of colors leads to under-stimulation whereas extreme complexity leads to over-stimulation. Harmony is a dynamic equilibrium. (Morton, 2008)

Understanding the science of colors is important to be able to create moods and emotions and direct guests to consume with pleasure. The world is too colorful to leave a wall blank and white, on the other hand loud colors aren't

the optimum either and can lead to unwelcomed side effects (Stadler, 2010). The use of colors belongs to one of the most fundamental possibilities to influence our surrounding and our wellbeing.

Classification of colors

There are three so called elementary or primary colors: Red, Blue and Yellow (Figure 1). In traditional color theory, these are the 3 pigment colors that can not be mixed or formed by any combination of other colors. All other colors are derived from these 3 hues. There are secondary colors that are created through mixing two of the primary colors with each other: Green, Violet, Orange (Figure 2). Blue and Yellow make Green, Blue and Red make Violet and Red and Yellow result in Orange. There are also tertiary colors that are formed by mixing a primary and a secondary color. That's why the hue is a two-word name, such as blue-green, red-violet, and yellow-orange as seen in Figure 3. (Morton, 2008)

Figure 1″ " Primary Colors: Blue, Red and Yellow

Figure 2 " Secondary Colors: Green, Orange and Violett"

Figure 3: " Tertiary Colors: Yellow-Orange, Red-Orange, Red-Purple, Blue-Purple, Blue-Green and Yellow-Green."

Effect of colors

Before discussing the impact of specific color hues, there are some more general observations that need to be noted. It is widely accepted to order colors into general families of warm, cool and neutral colors. (Pile, 1997)

Warm colors: The word warm has another meaning here, in the same sense as we speak of a warm greeting, a warm friendship or a warm atmosphere. The hues on the warm side of the color circle are: red, orange and yellow, including all their shades, tints. These warm colors are generally understood to create a cozy, comfortable, homelike and pleasant atmosphere (Pile, 1997). Experiments also have shown that interiors with primarily warm color shemes will appear comfortable to occupants even with the actual air temperature lower than required to achieve comparable comfort in identical spaces using cooler colors.

Cool colors: Every shade and tint of the green-blue-violet side of the color circle fall under this term. They are related with calm, relaxing and more contemplative experiences. Cool colors tend to lower the sense of actual air temperature and therefore are often preferred in spaces where excessive heat (climatic or artificial) can be anticipated. At an extreme, cool colors may have a negative and depressive psychological impact (Pile, 1997).

Neutral colors: White, Black and Gray fall between warm and cool, having less intense psychological impact and therefore in its extreme form may have a bland or boring effect. In its positive uses, neutral colors may propose businesslike, practical and utilitarian atmospheres with a minimum of emotional content (Pile, 1997).

According to Molton (2008) colors have the power of conveying a mood or message. It can make or break how people perceive a business – or a product. As evidence, consider the $23 million in sales made by Heinz's

green ketchup. In the following abstract the effects of individual colors will be identified.

Blue:

Molton (2008) claims that blue color can work as appetite suppressant. Blue colored food is not a common occurrence in nature. There are no such things as blue salad, blue meat and besides blueberries, the color blue just doesn't exist a significant quantity of natural food color. Looking at Figure 4 one will admit that this dish with blue colored rice looks everything but tasty.

Figure 4 Blue Rice, Cherry Tomatoes and Pork (http://i67. photobucket. com/albums/h289/cyberpete/Cooking/PICT0254. jpg)

Spaces appear bigger in size and seem chilly and clean. In Interior Design one should use the color blue only in spaces to relax, for example in the Wellness area of a Hotel, where red would have the opposite effect.

Red:

Red is claimed to be a dynamic and aggressive color. It stimulates psychologically and physically, enhances labor and movement and even encourages dancing. Not only venues with a dance floor make successful use of this color but also restaurants use red in dining environments, since the right shade of red can work as an appetizer (Mahnke, 1996). It activates metabolism and blood circulation of the body as it signifies pure energy. However it can also appear overwhelming and result in irritated guests (Morton, Color Matters, 2008).

Yellow:

Yellow brings the sunshine in. The color has the effect of lightning up bad mood and puts a room into a sunny and positive atmosphere. Spaces even appear bigger and more vital. It enhances concentration and stimulates the mind towards a positive attitude even in combination with darker colors. It is commonly used in Cafés and Bars since yellow inspires conversation and communication. In gastronomy it can be used to keep guests longer and therefore make them willing to consume more (Mahnke, 1996).

Green:

Green has a calming effect on people; it gives a feeling of balance tranquility, and security. The color is often used in conference rooms in Hotels (Pile, 1997) as it stands for creativity and willingness to learn new things. A green room appears vital and has a regenerating effect on the human organism. The color seems friendly and relaxing. Green is neither a cold nor a warm color, often it is understood as a neutral pole between the two.

Orange:

Orange can create a cheerful warm and comfortable atmosphere. It is known as the friendly and " social" color in Interior Design (Pile, 1997) that also has the ability to enhance appetite (Mahnke, 1996).

Brown:

Brown as used in interior decorating has the effect of giving a rustical and comfortable atmosphere.

White, Black and Grey:

White, Black and Grey belong to the so-called non-colors. They are perfect combined with other colors. However if too much black, white or grey is used in interior decoration it can give a feeling of heaviness and darkness. These colors make better use as neutralizers or contrasts to other colors (Pile, 1997).

Color in Restaurants

According to John Pile (1997), Restaurants call for a particularly sensitive use of color. An inappropriate color scheme might be the cause for a restaurant to fail even if it might have been successful otherwise. As mentioned in the previous abstract, appetite is very strongly affected by light and color. The sight of a blue cake wouldn't make your mouth water as much as it did when it was chocolate-brown. The experience of eating can be made more pleasant or less so, through the choice of color in surroundings.

" Experience suggests that certain colors are best avoided entirely; these include black, darker or cold grays, strong tones of violet and yellow-greens." (Pile, 1997).

Pile further states that the color red is believed to be stimulating to the appetite and other warm tones tend to generate a comfortable atmosphere but should be used with moderation along with stronger accent colors. To conceal spots and soiling in a restaurant establishment, it is usual to choose

certain colors, materials and patterns, however the color of such areas as tabletops, linens, dishes glassware and menus, that take in most of the diner's field of vision of the restaurant, should be considered along with the colors of the rest of the interior space (Pile, 1997).

In his book " Color in Interior Design", John Pile claims that even the style of food should have an effect in color choice. He states that in fast-food outlets, cafeterias and other restaurants where a rapid pace of service is anticipated, the choice of bright colors and strong contrasts have the best effect. Restaurants with more traditional style, perhaps serving better cuisine at a more leisurely pace and probably even at higher prices, are better served by softer, warmer tones seen under a lower level of lighting. The use of natural wood tones, metallic elements, and mirrors are traditional elements in bar areas.

" Dining rooms of traditional clubs are commonly developed in tones of brown and tan suggesting a masculine atmosphere while lighter tones of cream, beige and yellow relate to a more varied clientele." (Pile, 1997). There are certain types of restaurants, such as Seafood restaurants, that have developed a tradition in style and setting, using natural wood for tabletops and floors along with areas of off white, tan or brown in other elements. The color Blue is a favored accent color, as it supposedly is associated with the sea, but it should definitely not be used in excess as to avoid a cold and unappetizing effect. Various national cuisine style restaurants can also be emphasized through use of color, such as white and red in Austrian or red green and white in Italian restaurants, but such

associations are not essential and always threaten to turn to cliché when they are overdone.

Customer Satisfaction Questionnaires

Importance of customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction depends on a product perceived performance in delivering value relative to a buyer's expectations (Philip Kotler, 2006). The buyer will be satisfied, according to whether or not the products performance meets the expectations. Expectations are based on experiences, opinions of friends and market information and promises.

New Baroque

Introduction of New Baroque

Venues of this category feature exuberant lightning, decadence and pattern. Many restaurants take their cues from this approach, yet are rather more contemporary with just the odd extravagant flourish. (Ryder, 2007)

The restaurant chosen to represent this category in this study is the Cospaia in Brussels, Belgium.

Figure 5 Restaurant COSPAIA, Brussels, Belgium

Design Concept of Cospaia

The concept is unique and mysterious. For Cospaia Jan Tindemans united a passionate designer and an exclusive location. The myth starts immediately with the location of Cospaia on the Boulevard de la Toison d'Or. Many habitants and visitors of Brussels will surely remember some of the famous

eateries that used to occupy this location. The entire neighborhood breathes luxury and coziness. Exclusive boutiques and first class hotels in the immediate vicinity, the Brussels Financial heart, the Embassies and the European quarter all within walking distance.

It is a dream location for a ' new style' restaurant with international ambition. Cospaia will easily fit in that exclusive list of addresses next to Café Costes in Paris, Bank in London, Vau in Berlin and Arts in Barcelona.

Marcel Wolterinck, an internationally recognized designer has created the interior design. (http://www. cospaia. be)

5. 3. Presentation of Results from Questionnaires
Global Views

Introduction of Global Views
Various aspects of other cultures and countries inspire the designs of restaurants of in category. Asia is continuing to lead the way as major influence in restaurant design in cities of the western world, whether or not it reflects the cuisine on offer. (Ryder, 2007) Representing the chapter Global Views in this study will the Megu Midtown in New York City, USA.

Figure 6 Restaurant MEGU, New York City, USA

Design Concept of " Megu"
Designed and created by Yasumichi Morita and his Japenese – based team Glamorous. For the first, Megu owner Mr Koji Imai asked Morita to introduce real Japanese beauty to New Yorkers. (Ryder, 2007)

The design team Glamourous chose to blend traditional and modern Japanese times. Authentic and avant-garde Japanese ingredients are combined to suit every palate. The overall décor is filled with customary Japanese interior accents, complimented with a contemporary ambiance.

The rich fabrics, the highest-grade wood materials, and the artistic integrity were upheld in the construction of MEGU Midtown. To express the rich design of Megu, they made the design rise vertically. " Almost everything about the design in the main dining room points from the ceiling to the floor. The lamp pillars, the family crests that cascade from top to bottom, and the 27-foot long hand drawn mural of tigers. When the guests arrive, they walk up the stairs to the mezzanine and then descend to the main dining room when their reservation is ready. In the waiting bar there is illuminated photographic art conveying the " heart of Japan," on 7-foot Kimono fabric pedestals. The visual delights at MEGU Midtown in terms of design are, the lamp pillars, the family crest emblems, the open sushi and Teppan-yaki kitchens, and the 500 pound Crystal Chandelier. Using the high ceilings and the wall-to-wall windows they have created another distinct and wonderful space." (www. megurestaurants. com/philosophy)

6. 3. Presentation of Results from Questionnaires

Modern Classic

Introduction Modern Classic

Simple dining spaces that often feature classic designs from the twentieth century belong to this category. The interiors don't rely on any design tricks, themes or grand gestures. Instead the designers rely on the beauty of

natural materials – such as marble and stone – for adornment. (Ryder, 2007) the example of this category presented in this study is The Modern in New York City, USA.

Figure 7 Restaurant THE MODERN, New York City, USA

Design concept of " The Modern"

Inspired by the Bauhaus movement, The Modern was created by architects Bentel & Bentel. The design plays a major role in every aspect of the dining experience at the Modern. " Open, elegant and filled with light, the Dining Room offers views of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden. Both the Dining Room and Bar Room are adorned with furniture and tableware from modernist greats, with a focus on Danish design." (http://www. themodernnyc. com)

6. 3. Presentation of Results from Questionnaires

Research Design

Research Design

The type of research design is very important for the whole study and is a major factor for the significance of the results. In the case of this study a quantitative research design was chosen.

Ryder (2007) defines restaurant design styles thematic categories: Global Views, New Baroque, Modern Classic and High Concept. In this study three categories were chosen as examples: Global Views, New Baroque and Modern Classic. Then one restaurant out of each of these categories was elected to represent the category. While preparing the questionnaires some

recommendations were kept in mind. The length of the survey played an important role. The survey was designed online in English language only. It was kept in mind to keep the survey answer possibilities brief and simple. Three different pictures of different restaurant were implemented in the survey. This was done using the website http://www. onlineumfragen. com. Questions about the overall design and atmosphere relating to each picture of the three restaurants were created (Bitner, Evaluating Service Encounters: The Effects of Physical Surroundings and Employee Responses, 1990) (Kisang, 2005) and (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1999). After completing the general questions about each individual restaurant, the participants were asked to choose one establishment to plan a special event at (eg. their birthday party). The population was defined using the social network website http://www. facebook. com. A " group" was created and 1427 people invited to join. After one week of data collection (April 22nd – April 29th 2010) the survey went offline and the analysis began. By then there were 201 samples in the study.

Besides the Personal Data Information and the question where respondents are asked to choose one of the three restaurants for a special event, there are solely rating scales in the survey. All respondents completed the questionnaires through the website only. After some adjustments and the preparation of the data collected, the Data then was exported into the Program SPSS, ready for further analysis. The complete questionnaire can be found in the Appendices.

Data analysis

Demographics

After one week of data collection a proud sample of 201 respondents was achieved. This abstract will give an introduction to the population of the study. 126 of the respondents in the survey are female, that leaves 75 male respondents (Figure 1:" Gender"). Figure 2: " Age" shows that 14 respondents were younger than 20 years old. The majority of respondents (98 respondents) are between 21 and 24 years old. 69 respondents are 25-29 years of age and 20 respondents are older than 30 years.

Figure 8: " Gender"

Figure 9: " Age"

There are 121 respondents still at University and 70 respondents who already have graduated from University. 9 participants have a High school Diploma and 1 completed an Apprenticeship (Figure 6:" Education").

115 Students took part in the survey. The remaining respondents are White-collar workers (2