



The Left Bank Brasseries: The Evolution of a French-Inspired Restaurant

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Abstract

Restaurant success comes from great internal and external factors. Internal factors include menu, financial support, and staff. External factors include location, market segment, competitors, and general economic environment (Jalis, Kassim and Mohamad, 2012). This study attempts to unveil how the Left Bank Brasseries, a well-respected restaurant in Marin County, Northern California, has sustained its success for over twenty years. Using primary data, this study examines the restaurant's best management practices and customer satisfaction levels to determine the core competencies of the company.

Introduction

Lack of capital is a major contributing factor for restaurant failure. A restaurant without a sufficient amount of capital and cash flow will not survive because of three major expenses: overhead, labor, and food cost.

Performance is measured in terms of two aspects: company's market success factors (e.g., their image, their levels of customer and employee satisfaction), and their financial performance (Llach et al., 2013).

Accurate and consistent internal management decisions may allow a restaurant to maintain financial stability. Managing and developing strong customer relationships overtime can help create a loyal customer base that will likely translate into healthy and sustainable growth for the business.

"Food presentation, food taste, seating arrangement, interior design, music, reliable services and employee competency are the key determinants of customer satisfaction" (Ponnam and Balaji, 2014).

A successful fine dining restaurant competes on differentiation, not just on price. The focus is on consistently delivering quality and value to the customer. Owners and managers must make it happen everyday with high energy, passion, and love for the business (Parsa et al., 2005)

Data and Methodology

Use of primary data at two levels to identify the core competencies of the company, which is modeled around French cuisine but managed through an American perspective.

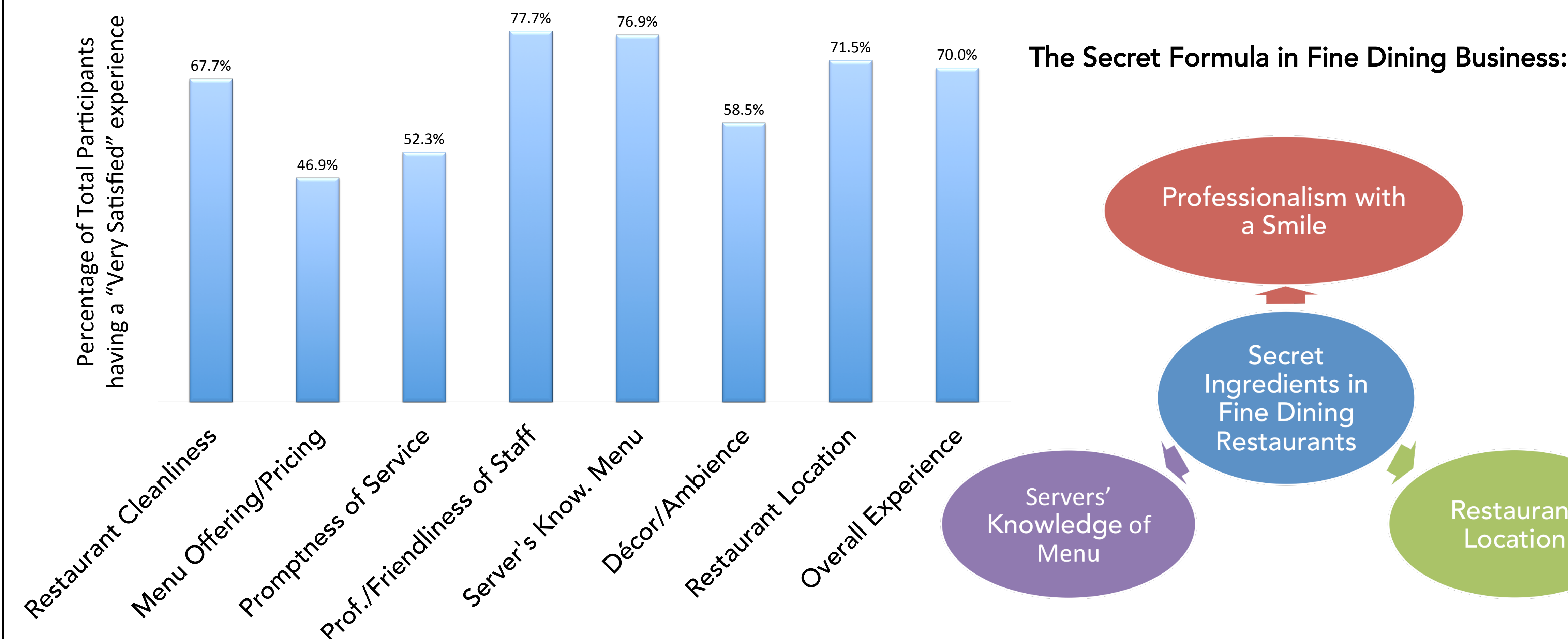
Customer Satisfaction: Survey

- N = 130 participants
- Age = 18 years and above
- Gender:
 - Male: 40.8% (53)
 - Female: 59.2% (77)
- Customer Type:
 - Repeat: 81.5% (106)
 - New: 18.5% (24)

Management Perception: Interview

- CEO (Chief Executive Officer)
 - COO (Chief Operating Officer)
 - Culinary Director
 - HR Director (Human Resources)
 - GM (General Manager – Larkspur)
 - Chef de Cuisine (Head Chef – Larkspur)
- Company Profile:
- 20+ years in operation, 2014 sales: \$4.2M

Results: Left Bank Brasseries' Sources of Competitive Advantage



Results

Core Competencies & Business Strategies

Ultimate customer satisfaction is the key metric of success in the fine dining segment of the restaurant industry.

The Left Bank Brasseries (LBB) is a successful French-inspired fine dining restaurant, which has been open for over 20 years and with \$4.2 million in sales in 2014.

The restaurant holds elements of superior food and beverage offerings, décor/ambience and service to create an unforgettable experience. Strategically located in Larkspur, Marin County, California.

Customers Satisfaction	Management Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regardless of age, gender, and being either a repeat or new customer, patrons at Left Bank Brasseries report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism/friendliness of staff • Server's knowledge of menu • Restaurant location (Larkspur, CA) as being more important than menu offerings and prices in their decision to eat at LBB. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of LBB believes their core competency is to provide an exquisite fine dining experience to their customers. Their mantra is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt to customer needs yet still stay true to the company's vision of "Fun and French Everyday." • Compete on value. Be the best-cost provider. • Continuously educate managers, employees, and customers.

Conclusion

Evolution of Customer Values, Tastes and Preferences in Fine Dining

- Customers expect great value of food and quality of service with respect to price. Quality food means organic and sustainable.
- Customers in the fine dining segment expect top-notch service that goes far beyond taking an order and delivering food.

Success in Fine Dining Business Requires More Than Taste and Pricing; it Requires Combining Food and Art

- Great tasting food and competitive pricing are not enough for success in the fine dining restaurant industry.
- Presentation & creativity along with a warm professional service have become the new norm – or requirement.
- Chefs are being sourced globally and pushed to new creative limits.
- Servers are expected to be savvy about menu offerings and deliver value using maximum professional etiquette.

Future Research

Further research will focus on the challenges for established fine dining restaurants with loyal followings to attract new customers and adapt to the changing food and beverage trends.

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