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

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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 (Lich 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 Balej, 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).

Results: Left Bank Brasseries’ Sources of Competitive Advantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Total Participants</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism with a Smile</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Secret Formula in Fine Dining Business:</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secret Ingredients in Fine Dining Restaurants</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant Location</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chef's Knowledge of Menu</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Experience</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menu Offering/Price</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promptness of Service</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism of Staff</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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)

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.

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.

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

References

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.

Management Strategy
- Management of LBB believes their core competency is to provide an exquisite fine dining experience to their customers. Their mantra is:
  - 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.

Customers Satisfaction
- Regardless of age, gender, and being either a repeat or new customer, patrons at Left Bank Brasseries report
  - 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.