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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 (Lilach et al., 2013). Accurate and consistent internal management decisions may allow a restaurant to maintain financial stability. Managing and developing strong customer relationships over time 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

- **Percentage of Total Participants having a “Very Satisfied” Experience**
  - Restaurant Cleanliness: 67.7%
  - Menu Offering/Pricing: 69.3%
  - Promptness of Service: 52.3%
  - Server's Knowledge of Menu: 77.7%
  - Decor/Ambience: 77.8%
  - Overall Experience: 75.5%
  - The Secret Formula in Fine Dining Business: Professionalism with a Smile
  - Secret Ingredients in Fine Dining Restaurants

- **Results: Left Bank Brasseries’ Sources of Competitive Advantage**
  - Company Profile:
    - GM (General Manager – Larkspur)
    - Chef de Cuisine (Head Chef – Larkspur)
    - Servers are expected to be savvy about menu offerings and deliver value using maximum professional etiquette.

- **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)
  - 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.”

- **Management Strategy**
  - Customer 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.

- **References**