

Future of Sustainable Business: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

Editors

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CHAPTER 6

BEYOND TASTE AND FLAVOUR: THE INFLUENCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE ON CUSTOMER ATTRACTION

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Abstract

Although food quality is the heart of any restaurant, the modern consumer demands more than taste and flavour. Read on to learn about how restaurant infrastructure pieces such as interior design, seating layout, lighting, ventilation, accessibility, and ambience—including how it feels to enter and visit a restaurant—make the difference between attracting and retaining customers or losing out. Modern consumers gravitate toward beautifully designed spaces that combine comfort, aesthetics and an enjoyable dining experience. With global travel becoming so competitive, every customer – from comfortable cafes to fine-dining restaurants – is a valuable asset, so infrastructure investment has become a strategic process to drive customer interaction and generate customer footfall, and build brand loyalty. This article displays real-world business examples and marketing lessons illustrating how an aesthetically pleasing and operationally strong environment can promote customer success. The study also examines the intersection of the need for operational efficiency and ambience, and provides guidance for restaurant operators who want to bulk up their infrastructure without breaking the bank. In a crowded field, the setting can be as important to the experience as the menu.

Keywords: restaurant infrastructure, customer attraction, ambience, interior design, foot traffic, dining experience, customer engagement.

Introduction

In the modern competitive food industry, the success of a restaurant is no longer based on taste and flavour. With evolving consumer preferences, food outlets have become an experience that encompasses a journey and infrastructure plays a major part in shaping perceptions. Everything in and outside of the premises has its influence on the customer experience, from the first moment the customer walks in: the interior design, lighting, seating comfort, cleanliness, and even the background music. Today's consumers often choose a dining space not only for the quality of the steak on their plate, but also for the quality of the experience. As a result, a number of restaurant owners have invested heavily in infrastructure to seek a competitive advantage.

But when the upgrade in ambiance and interiors attracts customers, there is one question that needs to be asked: Are you always guaranteed a ROI? In other words, does improving interiors equal better business? In this study we seek to answer these questions by analysing how infrastructure relates to attracting customers. It examines the effect of strategic infrastructure decisions on customer behaviour, loyalty and word.

Statement of the Problem

Some restaurants spend fortunes on the infrastructure without really know the impact of their decisions on bringing customers in and making their businesses prosper. Whether such

investments actually lead to measurable increases in customer traffic and retention remains to be seen,

Importance of the Study

This study helps restaurant owners, marketers, and hospitality professionals understand how infrastructure influences customer behaviour. It provides insights into balancing aesthetic upgrades with operational goals, supporting smarter investment decisions in a competitive market.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the relationship between restaurant infrastructure and customer attraction
2. To analyze the impact of infrastructure investment on customer satisfaction and retention
3. To examine the connection between dining environment and customer reviews or ratings

Limitation of the Study

- Primary data presented in this research was the information provided by the restaurant Customers only.
- Only 100 respondents were selected from different parts of Chennai City.
- Data is collected only from Chennai City.
- Results of this research will be confined with sampling data only.

Research Methodology

Meaning

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem .the research is the studying his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the methods, techniques but also the methodology.

Data Collection

Data refers to information and facts. The task of data collection begins after the research problem has been defined and the research plan been decided.

There are two types of data collected

- 1. Primary data**
- 2. Secondary data**

Sample Size: Sample size refers to the number of respondents drawn out for the purpose of study. The sample size selected for this study is 100. Based on these respondents' answers, the rest of the study is conducted.

Statistical Tools: Statistical tools refer to the equipment that aid in conducting a research successfully. The statistical tools that aided in this research are charts like bar column, pie, cone, pyramid, line and cylinder

The other tools aided in this analysis are as follows;

- Percentage method
- Weighted average method

Review of Literature

This chapter deals with the brief review of literature relevant to the study. The reviews given in this study related to the consumers of various restaurant . To have an elaborate idea of these studies on operational efficiency, a brief review is needed and also an attempt is made to identify the research gap.

Bitner (1992) introduced the concept of *servicescape*, highlighting that the physical environment—like lighting, layout, and cleanliness—strongly influences how customers feel and behave in a service setting such as a restaurant.

Ryu and Jang (2008) found that the interior design and overall ambience of a restaurant significantly affect customer satisfaction, emotional response, and intention to return—even if the food remains constant.

Kivela et al. (2000) studied diners in full-service restaurants and concluded that atmosphere (lighting, temperature, music, decor) plays a key role in creating a memorable dining experience and directly affects customer loyalty.

Namkung and Jang (2007) emphasized that customers judge the overall dining experience not only by the food but also by service quality and physical surroundings, making infrastructure a vital component in customer decision-making.

Ladhari et al. (2017) analyzed customer reviews and found that restaurants with visually appealing interiors often receive more online attention, photos, and positive word-of-mouth, which helps attract new customers.

Ha and Jang (2010) showed that comfortable seating, organized space, and appealing design encourage longer dining times and increased spending, linking physical comfort directly to sales performance.

Wall and Berry (2007) discussed the emotional connection between physical environment and brand perception. They suggested that customers often associate well-designed spaces with higher quality and are more likely to become repeat visitors.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

TABLE 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	42	42	42
Female	58	58	58
Total	100	100	100
Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
18-30	90	90	90
31-45	5	5	5
46-60	5	5	5
Total	100	100	100
Occupation	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Student	20	20	20
Homemaker	3	3	3
Salaried	64	64	64
Business	13	13	13
Total	100	100	100
Education	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
SSLC	2	2	2
HSC	12	12	12
UG	19	19	19
PG	60	60	60
Others	7	7	7
Total	100	100	100
Monthly Income	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
25000	63	63	63
25000-35000	19	19	19
36000-50000	14	14	14

above50000	4	4	4
Total	100	100	100

Percentage Analysis

Table 1: Customer Preferences When Entering a Restaurant for the First Time

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Interior Design	45	45
2	Cleanliness and Hygiene	25	25
3	Lighting and Ambience	20	20
4	Seating Arrangement	10	10
Total	100	100	100

Table 2: Customer Likelihood to Revisit a Restaurant Based on Comfort and Interiors

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Definitely Yes	40	40
2	Probably Yes	35	35
3	Maybe	15	15
4	Not at all	10	10
Total	100	100	100

Table 3: Customer Willingness to Return Based on Infrastructure with Average Food Quality

S.No	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Very Likely	10	10
2	Likely	20	20
3	Unlikely	30	30
4	Very Unlikely	40	40
Total	100	100	100

Table 4: Aspects Most Frequently Mentioned in Customer Reviews

S.NO	Particulars	Respondents	Percent
1	Food quality	30	30
2	Staff behaviour	20	20
3	Ambience & interior	40	40
4	Pricing	10	10
Total	100	100	100

Weighted Average Method

Table 5: Importance of Restaurant Appearance in Customer Dining Decisions

S.NO	PARTICULARS	WEIGHTED SCORE
1	Importance of Restaurant Appearance in Customer Dining Decisions	285

Weighted Average Score = 285 / 10 = 28.5

Table 6: Most Appealing Infrastructure Features While Choosing a Restaurant

S.No	Particulars	Weighted Score
1	Most Appealing Infrastructure Features While Choosing a Restaurant	255

Weighted Average Score = 255 / 10 = 25.5

Table 7: Infrastructure Features Providing Highest Customer Satisfaction

S.No	Particulars	Weighted Score
1	Infrastructure Features Providing Highest Customer Satisfaction	260

Weighted Average Score = 260 / 10 = 26

Table 8: Impact of Dining Environment on Customer Ratings

S.No	Particulars	Weighted Score
1	Impact of Dining Environment on Customer Ratings	285

Weighted Average Score = 285 / 10 = 28.5

Table 9: Dining Environment Factors Influencing Customer Recommendations

S.No	Particulars	Weighted Score
1	Dining Environment Factors Influencing Customer Recommendations	265

Weighted Average Score = 265 / 10 = 26.5

Findings

1. Most Ninety percent of the participants fall within the age range of 18 to 30 years.
2. Most Among the respondents, 58% identify as female, while 42% identify as male.
3. Predominance 64% of the participants are employed in salaried positions, while only 3% identify as homemakers.
4. Predominance Sixty percent of the respondents possess postgraduate level education, while only two percent have completed secondary school leaving certificate level education.

Objective 1: Restaurant Infrastructure and Customer Attraction

1. **Interior design** was the top factor attracting customers on their first visit, followed closely by **cleanliness and lighting**.
2. A majority of respondents rated **physical appearance** of the restaurant as an important to very important factor in their dining decisions.
3. Among specific features, **comfortable seating** and **well-decorated interiors** were considered the most appealing while choosing a restaurant.

Objective 2: Infrastructure's Impact on Customer Satisfaction and Retention

4. Around **75% of customers** indicated they are likely to revisit a restaurant due to its **comfort and ambience**.
5. **Clean and modern restrooms** and **good ventilation** were identified as the top contributors to customer satisfaction.
6. Most customers stated that even if a restaurant had great infrastructure, **they would not return** if the **food quality was average**, highlighting that infrastructure supports but does not replace food quality.

Objective 3: Dining Environment and Customer Reviews

7. **Ambience and interior** were the most commonly mentioned aspects in **online reviews**, more than even food and service in some cases.
8. The **dining environment** had a **strong to moderate influence** on customer ratings and feedback.
9. **Interior design** was found to be the top factor that encourages customers to **share reviews or recommend** a restaurant, followed by music and cleanliness.

Suggestions

Restaurants should focus not only on food quality but also on improving their infrastructure to enhance the overall dining experience. Investing in elements like interior design, proper lighting, seating comfort, and hygiene facilities can significantly increase customer satisfaction and attract repeat visits. Owners should regularly seek customer feedback to identify which features need improvement. However, infrastructure should complement, not replace, the importance of good food and service. A balanced approach—combining ambience, cleanliness, and quality food—can lead to higher customer loyalty, better reviews, and increased footfall, ultimately contributing to long-term business success in the competitive food industry.

Conclusion

The study clearly shows that restaurant infrastructure plays a vital role in attracting and retaining customers. While food remains the core offering, factors like ambience, seating comfort, lighting, and cleanliness greatly influence customer decisions, satisfaction, and online feedback. A well-designed and comfortable dining environment encourages customers to stay longer, share positive reviews, and revisit the restaurant. However, infrastructure alone is not enough—quality food and service must go hand-in-hand. In conclusion, smart investment in infrastructure, when aligned with customer expectations, not only improves the overall dining experience but also strengthens the restaurant's market position and profitability.

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