Drivers of customers' service experiences
A customer perspective on co-creation of restaurant services,
 focusing on interactions, processes and activities

av

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Abstract


It is essential for service companies to understand how their customer service experiences are formed. This is especially important since service experiences are highly subjective and involve customers cognitively, emotionally and behaviorally. Although customer service experiences are a well recognised research topic in both, culinary arts and service research, dynamic interactions, activities and the customers’ active involvement have so far gained little attention. As a consequence the approach in previous research paints a rather static picture of customer service experiences. By introducing the principles of service dominant logic a first person view and the understanding of drivers of customer service experiences could be facilitated.

The overall aim of the thesis is to extend and deepen the understanding of drivers of favourable and unfavourable customer service experiences. The context selected is the restaurant context. The overall aim is reflected in four intermediate aims. Two separate studies were conducted. First a two-stage questionnaire based study, describing the phone reservation encounter compared to dining satisfaction; second a critical incident technique study including 195 short narratives of customers’ favourable and unfavourable service experiences at restaurants. Interview data were analysed according to constant comparative analysis principles.

The main empirical contributions of this thesis are the move from static descriptions of service to examining dynamic drivers of favourable and unfavourable customers’ service experiences, and especially the analysis of social interactions as a driver of service experiences and the categorisation of drivers. Theoretically the thesis introduces the experience driver constellation, reflecting the dynamic process of co-creation in specific situations, when favourable and unfavourable customer service experiences are formed. Suggestions are made to develop the Five Aspects Meal Model and the Experience Room Framework through the addition of actors, the exterior environment and organisational routines to the models.

Keywords: customer service experience, experience driver, dynamic, restaurant, co-creation, critical incident technique, phone encounters, experience room, servicescape, social interaction.