

THE DEGREE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN UNIVERSITY RESTAURANTS: THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EVORA IN PORTUGAL

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Abstract

Organizations in globalized and consumer societies are offering progressively more quality products in order to satisfy their customers. University restaurants are not indifferent to this phenomenon and also care about the degree of customer satisfaction. The present study was planned and developed in order to address this issue. The purpose of this investigation was to measure the degree of customer satisfaction in the restaurant "Cozinha do Cardeal" of the University of Evora (Portugal), so as to improve services according to the needs and wishes of the regular users. In overall terms, it was found that the quality of service offered by this restaurant was satisfactory. However, further analysis showed that the most critical items were included in the variable "external environment", namely: "accessibility for the disabled" and "parking". Moreover, emerged as the most requested needs the following: "a more varied menu" and "an extension of opening hours". Given these results, we recommend the restaurant management to implement urgent measures to improve services, which may contribute not only to reduce the dissatisfaction of the regular customers but also to attract new ones.

Keywords: Quality, Customer Satisfaction, University Restaurant, Catering Services.

1 INTRODUCTION

Published material on the theme "quality" is abundant and diverse, not emerging one definition or a consensual viewpoint. Garvin [1], for example, classifies the various settings in five main groups: *transcendental, based on the product, in manufacturing, on value and on user*. Authors like Paladini [2], Ghobadian, Speller and Jones [3] consider that all approaches may be summarized in one, as all them are related to the needs of the consumer: *based on the user (or customer)*. From Garvin definitions, Slack [4] has combined all approaches as follows: *quality is consistent with the expectations of consumers*.

The various studies denote an apparent trend towards the supremacy and importance of clients in the whole process of analysis and search for total quality. In fact, as stated in Green [5], customer satisfaction with a particular service can determine the soundness and reputation of an organization in demand of a service of excellence; that is why more and more organizations guide their policies to the needs and requirements of customers. In an attempt to retain those customers through its satisfaction, the positive feedback from the word-of-mouth, referred to by Appiah-Adu, Fyall and Singh [6], can arise.

The growing importance of quality to the organizations led to a radical change in the form of management. Lovelock and Wright [7] indicate factors such as time and speed in attendance, as key elements to consider for a customer's full satisfaction. In the case of the food sector, direct contact between the consumer and the service is immediate and explicit and can instantly set up a preference for the service (or not) [8].

2 DEGREE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN THE RESTORATION

Some studies have already been developed on the topic of customer satisfaction for restaurants in general. The study of Gibbert *et al.* [9] entitled *The deployment of a quality label in Toledo restaurants and Similar* aimed to verify the degree of customer satisfaction and to assess the importance of the restaurants' quality seal of those who participated in the group of restaurants of Toledo (Brazil). As a conclusion, it was noted that the acquisition of this seal was an important means to address the needs