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# LUNCH CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FACTORS IN THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS

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## ABSTRACT

*This empirical research points out elements which effect lunch customers' experience. Successful customer experiences are the base for a successful business. According to the Five Aspects Meal Model (FAMM) developed by Gustafsson (2006) the restaurant customers' experience consists of the experience of the product, room, meeting, atmosphere and management system. The atmosphere is a result of the other four aspects. In the case study, three focus working people groups ate lunch twice in two different lunch restaurants. Between the first lunch and the second one microarchitectural changes were made e.g., colours, soundscape, lunch table, trays, napkins, plates, and runners. After the second day, the focus groups were interviewed and the interviews were transcribed.*

*The results show that: the food itself, high quality service and room factors are the most important elements for a successful lunch experience. A good lunch was supposed to be tasty and taste like self-prepared food. A good lunch included a wide, high-quality and surprising variety of salads. The room and environment was supposed to be clean and light and transactions fast. Every group emphasized gentle meetings with the personnel. The economical indications of the customer's experience were discussed, and some suggestions for the restaurant business and for future academic research are given.*

Key Words: Food experience, FAMM-model, lunch, restaurant management

## INTRODUCTION

The role of experiences has increased in the field of consumer behavior research. Postmodernism has affected e.g. hedonism of consumers and has increased complexity in consumer behavior research since the 1980's (Pitkääkoski, 2015). Experience is holistic and multisensory, but also a personal event with engram. Positive emotions, activities, concentration and deep consciousness are parts of the experience (Pitkääkoski, 2015). Pine & Gilmore (1999) disclosed the possibilities of the experiences as the source of business and at the end of the 90's experience products got a new kind of characteristic, purpose and content.

Finnish restaurant culture, food consuming and food preferences have met many changes. The cycles of restaurant trends have shortened and restaurants have had to meet new kinds of customer preferences and to adapt. New concepts of business spread quickly and concepts that were not good enough are driven out. Lunch is an important meal in Finland. Most Finnish people eat lunch in restaurants between 11:00 and 13:00 and there are a lot of lunch restaurants in Finland.

Achieving, sustaining and strengthening competitive advantages is the key to good business strategy. A successful restaurant has to know their own business, customers and competitors. The core of a competitive advantage is understanding the sources and mechanisms of customer experiences and benefits.

## RESTAURANT BUSINESS AND LUNCHESS IN FINLAND

Economic results depend on costs and sales. Sales depend on the number of customers and price. For example, price elasticity and competition effect also price setting, besides the quality and material cost of the food. Improvement of the customer experience leads to increased sales. There are many ways to improve customer experience. Some elements of experience do not cost anything and some of them need investments or increased operational costs. Some changes may even improve customer experience and decrease operational costs. Restaurant business is based on the customers' experience. Nowadays they share their experiences on the internet as well as choose a restaurant based on other peoples experiences that they read about there. The financial result of the restaurant strongly correlates with experiences in the long term (Pitkäkoski, 2015).

The number of people (n = 1559) who eat at restaurants have increased (MaRa, 2016 a). A typical Finn eats 3.5 times at a restaurant during a two weeks period. Younger Finns eat more often than older people and managers (8.5 times/2 weeks) eat more often than workers (3.8 times / 2 weeks). In 2016 51 % of those who ate at a restaurant thought that the quality of the food is the most important criteria, 49 % thought it was the location, 42 % thought it was the price level, 25 % thought the most important criteria was the service, 24 % it was the delivery time of the service, 23 % thought it was the variety on the menu. A peaceful environment was the most important criteria for 13 % (11th) of the respondents and 7 % (15th) thought it was the interior of the restaurant. (Mara, 2016 b; Figure1) 51 % of thought that the location was the most important criteria to choose lunch restaurant. The quality of the food was the most important criteria for 49 %, 22 % thought the most important criteria was the service, 23 % it was the delivery time of the service, 24 % thought it was the variety on the menu. A peaceful environment was the most important criteria for 11 % (11th) of respondents and 4 % (15th) thought it was the interior of the restaurant. (Mara, 2016 b). In Finnish personnel restaurants the share of raw material costs was 31 %, personnel costs 37 %, gross margin 4 %, depreciations 1 %. The share of rents was 12.5 % (Mara, 2016 a)

## RESTAURANT EXPERIENCE

Experience cannot be managed, but experience about production has to be managed. Management is a continuous process cycle of planning, doing, checking and acting (Deming, 2000) and is based on measuring. Overall customer satisfaction is one critical factor behind business success. Service attributes are unclear compared to product satisfaction attributes because services are immaterial and heterogenic, but is also consumed and produced at the same time. Touching, tasting, hearing, smelling and seeing a product have an important role in our understanding. A good perception of these roles has a valuable advantage in the market today. The use of senses may effect, for example, the experience of a brand, its interest, preference and loyalty of customers. These senses create the image of our daily lives, and by using them, we satisfy our needs and desires. (Wansink & Van Ittersum, 2012)

The food acceptance index describes how contextual variables affect the acceptability of food. For example, ethnic food was consumed more in an authentic environment. Contextual and situational factors as well as personal exceptions and experiences effect the acceptance. (Meiselman,1996). Cardello (1996), Edwards (2003) and Meiselman (2000) found that the eating environment correlates strongly with the overall experience and acceptance as well as food acceptance. Environment changes cognitive processes and emotions (Werner et. al., 2013). Contextual variables are more important as a part of the overall acceptance than as a part of an individual meal (King et. al., 2005).

Werner et. al. (2103) found cognitive and emotional differences and control for the kind and amount of food consumed between a restaurant meal and solitary meal situations. They changed social context (in the company compared to alone), availability of time (plenty compared to limited), service (being served compared to self-service), environment (spacious restaurant with music compared to a small, plain office with no music), control over food choice (choice from 20 dishes and 3 soft drinks compared to no choice), and a 15-minute walk after lunch compared to before lunch. They found that a meal eaten in a restaurant increased sensitivity to threatening facial expressions and diminished cognitive control and error monitoring. They did not find any effects in semantic memory. As a conclusion the restaurant meal with a social component may be more relaxing than a meal eaten alone in a plain setting and may reduce cognitive control.

There are several models, frameworks and measures to describe customers' opinions Parasuraman et.al. (1988) developed Servqual-metrics, for service quality measurement. Knutson et.al. (1990) developed a model for hotels

and named it Lodgserv. Steven et.al. (1995) developed Servequal to fit restaurants and named it Dineserv-metrics. Both of the models have a narrow scope of the environment including visual attractability and cleanliness. They emphasize service quality, communication and empathy. Ruy (2005) developed the Servicescape-based Dinescape-model for fine dining restaurants. It includes restaurant interior and customers' emotions.

The Five Aspects Meal Model developed by Gustafsson et.al. (2016) is used to describe a customer's restaurant experience. It has five aspects, which are: room, meeting, product, the atmosphere and the management control system. According to the model, the first aspect is to describe the restaurant visit starting from entering the restaurant. The second aspect is "meeting" including customers meeting personnel but also other customers. The third aspect is product (food and beverage). The fourth aspect is the management control system covering the economic aspects, laws and logistics. The fifth aspect is the atmosphere and is a result of the other four aspects. (Gustafsson, 2016)

**The room.** The room can be a restaurant, hospital, school, home or open air. Fulfilling customers' needs to pay attention to the room as a part of the entirety. When decorating a room professionally, one has to have knowledge about history, architectural style, textiles, design and art. (Gustafsson, 2016) The experience is different in different rooms (e.g. school, restaurant, army) even if the meal is the same (Cardello AV, 1996; Edwards, 2003 & Meiselman HL, 2000). The lighting, colours, and textiles can have a large impact on this. (Meiselman et. al. 1987; Edwards et.al. 2003). Earlier experiences and senses in similar environments can affect the appreciation of the same meal in different contexts. (Gustafsson, 2016) The meal situation, social interaction and physical environment have a positive effect on food acceptability. Changes in contextual factors change the acceptability of some dishes (King et al. 2004). The meal needs to be in accordance with the overall style of the restaurant (Bowen & Morris, 1995). Restaurant interiors have an important role in the meal experience (Nissen Johansen & Blom 2003; Andersson & Mossberg 2004, Ahlgren et al. 2004a, Finkelstein, 1989)

**The meeting.** The meeting includes meetings between service staff and customers but also meetings between customers as well as meetings between service staff members. Contact between service personnel and the customer have an impact on the experience. The waiters have authority and power more than customers do. They are supposed to use the power gently and handle customers with an observant and helpful attitude. The importance of meetings is found in many studies. Personal service was found to be as important as the delivery of service (Mattila, 2010). The meetings between customers are important too.

**The product.** The product aspect consists of the food and beverages. The product is very important according to research. (Gustafsson, 2006). The visual effect of the core product was an important factor according to Hansen et al (2005). The appearance of the dish decided in some situations if restaurant was successful or not. An error in product and the service process can decrease experience. Successful products and optimal experience require craftsmanship, science and aesthetical/ethical knowledge of the processes. (Gustafsson, 2006; Pitkääkoski 2015). The menu has to take into account variations and balance in foodstuffs, taste, flavours, nutrition, cooking methods, temperature, consistency, colour, form and suitable beverages (Dornenburg & Page, 1996).

**The management control system.** The management control system covers all aspects of administration, leadership, economic and legal aspects as well as logistics. Different restaurant concepts have different management control systems. The management control system issues include: pricing, following legislation of hygiene, alcohol and kitchen as well as dining room logistics, labour etc., staff requirements and training. Deficiencies in the management process easily lead customers' to disappointments, even if customers only see deficiencies in the management process as failures in meeting or product. Successful management requires knowledge about business administration, marketing, work organization, statistics and practical-productive knowledge. Leaders, preferably with academic education, should be able to combine scientific knowledge with practical and productive knowledge and see guests' expectations and the meals in their entirety. (Gustafsson, 2006)

**The atmosphere.** The meaning of atmosphere is discussed in Gustafsson's research paper and means the result of the room, product, meetings and the management control system, which altogether means the atmosphere and is the entire meal experience or hotel experience. A restaurant meal with a social component may be more relaxing than a meal eaten alone in a plain setting and may reduce cognitive control (Sommer et.al 2013). Kontukoski et al. (2016) have argued that people associate shades of green with peacefulness, which is favorable in a restaurant environment.

## METHODS

**Research questions and methodological choices.** This empirical research was a part of the Värinä project in the Finnish cities of Seinäjoki and Tampere in March and June 2016. The aim of this research was to discover lunch customer's experience and how changes in the room's aspect affected customer experience.

The research questions were formulated as follows:

*(RQ1) What aspects are involved in a successful customer experience?*

*(RQ2) How changes of the room aspect affect customer experience?*

*(RQ3) What aspects of the lunch restaurant may affect the economical results of the restaurant?*

The empirical research setting is described with elements named by Johansson (2004). The elements used in the research set planning are: the type of restaurant concept, the type of meal, the type of guests/diners and what do they want, the season, the dining room exterior, the way how the tables are laid, textiles and utensils used, the lights and the sounds (Table 1). The FAMM model was selected for the framework for results of the study because it has been used in 76 academic written papers (between 1997 – 2012) according to the Magnusson Sporre et. al (2103).

**Focus groups.** There were three focus groups (G1, G2 and G3), who ate lunch twice and then they were interviewed as groups. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Each group was observed having lunch on two consecutive days and the researchers modified the eating environment for the lunch on the second day and that was followed by the focus group interview. Two groups consisted six participants and one with five participants, were observed and interviewed. Two groups with university education, one of women and one of men, had lunch at a staff canteen situated in Seinäjoki in a complex of buildings comprising of over 80 organizations and companies. Women with university degree. Ages of women (G1) were: 23, 34, 37, 50, 56, 62. Ages of men with university degrees (G2) were: 33, 44, 45, 48, 52, 62 and ages of men with vocational degree (G3) were: 40, 48, 57, 58, 61

The third group, composed of men with vocational education, had lunch at a popular lunch restaurant in Tampere. Restaurant has traditional furnitures, low f'room and many interior elements. The restaurant in Seinäjoki is popular among white-collar workers having university degrees. It is chain owned canteen restaurant, and has simple furnitures and high and light rooms in new office building. The restaurant in Tampere, in turn, is well liked by blue-collar workers and privately owned. The research groups were divided by gender and education, as these are the major background factors affecting one's attitudes towards food and eating (e.g. Caplan 1997, Mäkelä 2002, Raulio & Roos 2012).

**Changes in the eating environment.** The eating environment was modified between day one and two. The aim was to build a calm and relaxing lunch environment that would direct the respondents to ponder their eating environment. "The microgeography of the table" (Sobal & Wansink, 2007) was changed by changing the plastic tray to a wooden one, thin and small napkins to heavy high-quality napkins, and heavily-worn plates with brand new more elegant ones. Grass green runners were placed onto the table to complement the earthy colors of the place setting. The soundscape was also changed. Normally both research restaurants have a commercial radio station playing in the background. The channel is chosen by the restaurant workers and on every focus group ate at the first day when the channel was a commercial station playing contemporary pop music. For the lunch on the second day, attended by respondents with university degrees, the instrumental music chosen by a sound designer was played in the background. Also the sound reproduction was changed. For the third group, men with vocational educations, music was not played on day two, because the earlier comments about the use of background music were primarily criticized by the respondents. Finally, for the second day's research lunch, the respondents were seated at the same table that was reserved for them in the corner of the restaurant. On the first day of the study, they were instructed to sit wherever they wanted and at the table they normally use. In that way it was possible to see if the company of others has an effect on the ways in which the respondents assess their lunch experience. The research setting and changes to the environment are displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Research setting and differences between first and second day

	DAY 1		DAY 2 (after manipulation)
Utensils used	tray	plastic	wooden
	napkins	thin and small	heavy and high-quality

	plates	heavily worn	new and elegant
Textiles used	place setting	-	a grass green runner
The lights	G1 & G2	big windows, lot of light, view to parking place	candles in the tables + big windows, lot of light, view to parking place
	G3	daylight and strip lighting	daylight and strip lighting
The sounds	G1 & G2	commercial station playing contemporary pop music	tested instrumental music chosen by a sound designer
	G3		no music

**Focus group interviews and analysis.** After the modified lunch on the second day, the respondents were gathered into a separate room to take part in a focus group interview. Robinson (1999, 905) says that a focus group is “an in-depth, open-ended group discussion of 1-2 hours' duration that explores a specific set of issues on a pre-defined and limited topic. Such groups consist typically of between five to eight participants and are convened under the guidance of a facilitator”. A set of themes were prepared, but the conversation was kept as free as possible and the respondents were instructed to talk with each other and comment on the remarks of others. As Puchta and Potter (2004) suggest, the researcher may direct the conversation if some subject needs more elaboration, some theme is uncovered, or some of the participants do not have a chance to talk. The themes of the interviews were food choices, lunch routines, lunch environment (including table setting, space, and soundscape), and emotions and feelings before, during, and after lunch.

In earlier research, pictures and articles have been used to facilitate interaction in the group (Barbour 2007, 84-88; Stewart et al. 2007, 92). In this case study an article from the newspaper Aamulehti (Aamulehti 17 November 2015) on the subject of healthy lunches had been used to facilitate interaction. The headline of the article was “How to Prevent Afternoon Tiredness” and it introduced various aspects of a healthy lunch including: working in a standing position after having lunch, drinking a sufficient amount of water during the day, and having enough protein from your meal. The interviews lasted approximately one hour and they were transcribed for analysis. Data was described and summarized, and analyzed in the context of the FAMM model (Gustafsson, 2014). Finally, the results are compared to the previous body of knowledge.

## RESULTS OF LUNCH CUSTOMERS EXPERIENCES

**Elements of a successful customer experience.** The most important elements of a successful lunch experience were food, service and the room. Good food was supposed to be tasty and taste like self-prepared, not industrial prepared food. A good lunch included wide, high-quality and a surprising variety of salads. The room and the environment were supposed to be clean and light and transactions fast. Every group emphasized friendly meetings with personnel. The results are explained in the following chapters according to the aspects of the FAMM model (Gustafsson, 2006). They are product, room, meeting, atmosphere and the management control system aspects.

*Product.* The product is supposed to be tasty and good looking. The salad buffet is supposed to have a wide variety and include surprising ingredients. The experience with salads affected pretty much the total experience of the restaurant. If the salad buffet is fine, then the final restaurant selection decision was made based on the main dish and the location of the restaurant. It did not matter if there were some left over food from the previous days, but it lead to a bad experience if something is totally missing towards the end of the opening hours. Every group highlighted the importance of food prepared the restaurant instead of the industrial food. If food was recognized or supposed to be convenience food, it was a reason for disappointment. Group A appreciated the information about the foods' origin and preferred to buy local food. Every group appreciated the fish courses in the menu but groups A and B did not like codfish at all and would like to eat local fish. Pricing issues were raised in every interview. Group 3 felt that if the price of the lunch is higher than lunch coupon they used, they thought that lunch is too expensive. Groups A and B in Seinäjoki restaurants felt the price is too high compared to convenience food bought from a nearby market. Especially men thought the soups and vegetarian food were too expensive.

*Room.* Cleanliness and the clearness of the room was highlighted in every focus group interview. The interviewees thought it is important to have windows and natural light, but group 1 had a very pleasant experience in the

restaurant which did not have any windows at all. Some people preferred to look outside during lunch, and another part of interviewees wanted to look to the centre of the restaurant. People (groups 1 and 2) were not disturbed about the parking place behind the window but mentioned that they preferred good views. Group 1 thought the central item in the table diminished the overall experience if the central item is not clean or is cheap or does not fit into the environment. Men did not pay attention to the central item. The interviewees preferred small tables instead of the long tables. The big tables were felt to be more of a canteen than a restaurant; even a small empty space between the tables created privacy.

*Meeting.* Customers do not necessarily meet any other personnel but the cashier and other customers. That is why the cashier should be very kind and helpful and meet every customer personally. Every group emphasized that personal meetings and conversations with the cook or restaurant's chef had a positive effect, and group 1 especially appreciated meeting with entrepreneur. For them it was value in itself to know the entrepreneur instead of it being a chain restaurant. If a customer asks, for example, for diet or food origin information it should be given in a very friendly way without becoming frustrated and it is thus possible to lift the overall experience.

*The atmosphere.* The purpose of the lunch for the interviewees in the restaurant was: to have healthy and good tasting food, for social purposes and to have a pleasant break. A few customers prefer to eat their lunch as late as possible because they have had breakfast with a lot of protein or in some other way a filling breakfast. Another reason was to have a peaceful moment after peak hours. Some felt comfortable when they ate alone at the table. However, they also enjoyed the general atmosphere created by voices of restaurant customer. Other customers were felt as an important factor of the atmosphere. Personnel created the atmosphere with friendly service attitude and friendly meetings Music on day 2 divided opinions but the interviewees thought the background discussion between customers created a good atmosphere.

Most of the interviewees eat home-made snacks because of saving money and also for social reasons; colleagues ate also home-made snacks and they had a pleasant moment together. Most of the interviewees were ready to spend money and eat lunch at the restaurant for social reasons. At the restaurant, the interviewees were supposed to have healthier food than the home-made snacks would be. This means having excellent salads and vegetables, but also high-quality fish.

*The management control system.* Every group thought the queuing time should be very short even if a queue or rush is seen as "a guarantee" of the quality of the lunch restaurant. Groups 1 and 2 in Seinäjoki considered the lunch restaurant should have some changing themes in the menu and decoration and give some inspiration to home cooking.

Menus should be available on the internet very easily. The group of white-collar women (G1) thought that it is important to have a printed menu on the coffee room table. They thought that they often make decisions to have lunch at the restaurant instead of their own homemade snacks, because of a good dish on the menu that creates the desire to have lunch at the restaurant. Every group discussed the importance of meetings and even short discussions with the cook or entrepreneur. Especially it was important to ask for customers' opinions about the restaurant. Especially the white-collar women group (G1) felt it is important to know the entrepreneur.

**The effect of room aspects on customer experience.** The interviewees thought that long tables suit canteens instead of restaurants. Long tables were associated with negative emotions. On the other hand, they discussed also that both long and smaller tables are needed. The interviewees thought that privacy and intimacy were not so important at lunchtime than at dinner. Some of the interviewees in every focus group felt more comfortable when they were sitting facing a window, but others liked to watch other customers and the restaurant.

Women enjoyed the central item when it was low enough and absolutely clean and of high quality and did not prevent placing trays on the table. Candles divided opinions, but if there were candles, they should absolutely must be lit. Table clothes created a sense of dignity. Bigger and higher quality napkin caused a feeling of guiltiness because of the waste, even if the interviewees liked them. The interviewees appreciated the cutlery placed ready on the tray.

Music on day 2 was felt to be more of an irritation instead of relaxing. Group 2 (white collar men) did not recognize the music on day 2 and thought that there was no music on day 2 at all. Every focus group thought that the conversations in the background was a good thing.

The interviewees in every focus group felt that one big plate would be more comfortable instead of separate plates for salad and the main dish. The interviewees prefer have only one plate and when it is big enough, they have possibility to have the courses separately, but also they felt it is easier to place one plate onto the tray instead of two plates. The interviewees also wanted to reduce the load for dishwashing.

**Effect of customer experience on the economical results.** Service and sensitivity to meet customers and the ability to make customers feel happy and welcome are not expensive but lead to better economic results. The higher the price is the higher were the expectations of the interviewees. The price also affected the experience. Disappointment in the food's high prices caused disappointment and especially group 2 felt disappointment is easier to accept with lower prices. The price of the lunch was also the reason for many interviewees deciding if they ate lunch at a restaurant or not. The interviewees were ready to pay for the experience and social context of eating lunch at the restaurant compared to homemade snacks.

Self-service did not cause any strong feelings for or against it. The self-service buffet however causes more food waste. Ready proportioned meals were felt to be healthier in group 3 than self-service meals, because then one cannot so easily overeat. On the other hand, the interviewees appreciated the possibility to choose for themselves. A clean and pleasant room is not a cost issue as much as it is a management issue. The right temperature, not too cold or not too warm may require some investments, but usually it is a management and interior design issue as well as lighting. Data also raised the need to pay attention to special occasions or business guests. Groups 1 and 2 wanted to have changing themes and changes in the interior at the lunch restaurant. They also wanted to have new ideas and innovations to inspire their own cooking.

Every point achieved that is increasing customer loyalty improves economic results. A great impact on customer loyalty seems to be the quality, innovativeness and variety of the salad buffet. In addition, a dessert is a way to increase the experience but it also causes a small increase in costs. The interviewees thought it would be nice to have the possibility to have a small dessert. The previous experiences about the food itself affected customer loyalty a lot. The most important criteria when choosing a lunch place was the location and one's own previous experiences. In many cases, the course is already selected from the menu on the internet. When the interviewees arrived at the restaurant, they often wanted to see the buffet first. They paid attention to what the buffet looked like and it was possible that they might change the restaurant after seeing the buffet. Reasons given to go somewhere else other than restaurants in the local area were special occasions, like a colleagues birthday, or a joint decision (made together beforehand) to have lunch somewhere else.

## CONCLUSIONS

The economic results of a restaurant depends upon costs and sales. Sales depend upon the number of customers and price. For example, price elasticity and competition effect price setting besides the food quality and costs. Improvements to the customer experience lead to increased sales. There are many ways to improve customer experience. Some elements of experience do not cost anything and some of them need investments or increased operational costs. Some changes may even improve customer experience and decrease operational costs. Total costs consist of fixed (e.g. rent, permanent personnel) and variable costs (e.g. raw material). Some elements of the lunch experience need investments (e.g. new decorations and furniture) or inputs to operational costs (e.g. raw materials with higher quality). Some other experience factors do not need monetary inputs, but are managerial issues. Many operational or strategic decisions have no cost effect but lead to changes (for better or worse) of the customers' experience. The manager and personnel have to be very conscious about the changes and be very sensitive to make corrections if needed.

The restaurant's success is based, in the long term, on the customers' experience. Customers share their experiences on the internet and choose a restaurant based on the experiences they read about on the internet, and also on their own experiences. The result on the restaurant strongly correlates with experiences (Pitkääkoski, 2015). Like Mara (2016) found, the results of this study show that restaurant choice depends also on the location of the restaurant. In



case of lunch the better the closer the restaurant is from the office. Inputs to quality and improvements to the customer experience increase customer loyalty and at least in the long term sales increases. The senses were an important part of experience as Wansink and Van Ittersum (2012) also found. Results of this study strongly correlates factors of the Gustafsson et.al. (2016) FAMM-model.

Results of this study show the importance of good food and service, a clean environment and the location of the restaurant which Mara (2016) also found. However, this study points out the deeper meanings of service quality, meetings and menu variety, especially concerning fish and salad dishes. Contextual and situational factors, and personal exceptions and experiences affected experience and acceptance as Meiselman (1996) also found. It can be said that the eating environment also affected the experience and food acceptance as Edwards (2003), Cardello (1996), Edwards (2003) and Meiselman (2000) have also described. Lunch was also a source of relaxation which is in line with (Werner et.al., 2013; King ym.,2005). The visual effect of the food was as important factor, as it was in Hansen et al (2004). The social and relaxing component of a lunch was very important in the case when home made snacks were eaten around a coffee room table or at a restaurant. This is in line with Sommer et.al (2013).

In the context of the FAMM-model, product is a necessity for lunch customers and it has to fit with customers expectations. The room has a great potential to create atmosphere and improve customer loyalty. The lighting, colours, and textiles have an impact on this as Meiselman et. al. 1987; Edwards et.al. 2003 also found. Changing themes are recommend based on this study, because customers are not only having lunch but also seeking inspiration for thier home. The experience of the interviewees about e.g. napkins and candles suggests that the meal needs to be in accordance with the overall style of the restaurant as Bowen & Morris (1995) also found. Also, the restaurant’s interior has an important role in the meal experience according to this study and in previous studies such as Nissen Johansen & Blom 2003; Andersson & Mossberg 2004, Ahlgren et al. 2004a and Finkelstein, 1989.

The following figure 2 is an attempt to illustrate how the factors affecting the lunch customers’ experiences are related and / or depend upon restaurant costs and managerial operations. The location and size of each experience factor is not absolute, but figure is an attempt to describe which of the factors need investments or inputs to the operational costs and which of the factors need managerial efforts (either personnel or operation management). The lunch customer’s experience factors are based on the results of this case study and placement of the cost-management scale is a conclusion from a small group of restaurant business professionals and information about lunch restaurants cost factors (Mara ry, 2016).

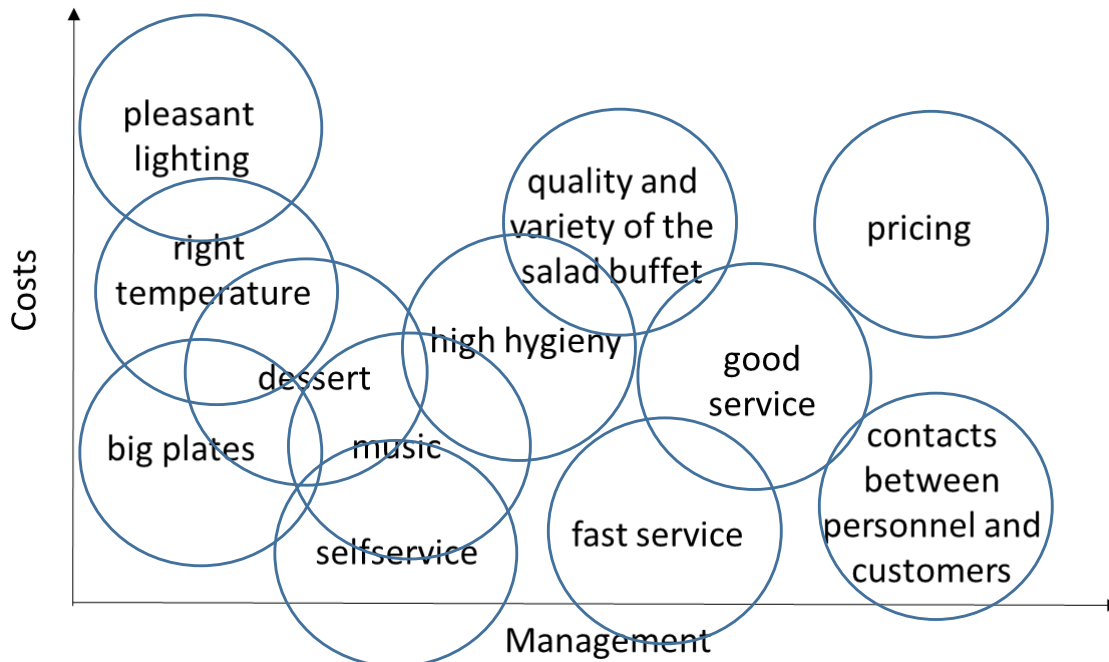


Figure 2. Cost-efficiency of the lunch customer’s experience factors

Dessert is not only a cost factor, but also a potential source of extra sales or customer loyalty. It may also be a criteria when selecting a restaurant and a potential opportunity to have additional sales. Cheaper salads, vegetarian food and soups could be considered. The role of a self-service buffet as a cost factor is incoherent because of material costs and food waste compared to personnel costs of the ready-made meals. Bigger plates could increase raw material costs and food waste, but placing cheaper dishes at the beginning of the line could compensate for the higher costs. Anyhow, the results of this study show that customers appreciate big plates and even think there is no need for salad plates. Cleanliness is mostly a question of management but may also need some extra work (costs) as well as service. The figure summarizes that the experiences are the source of business (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) but also show how they are related to the financial performance of the company.

Meetings are free and the potential source of free improvements to the customers' experience. The waiter has authority and power but customers need also meetings with the entrepreneur and cook. Personnel are supposed to be interested in the customers' opinions. The management has to be competent because customers see a lack in the management process as failures in meeting or product and customer loyalty decreases. In the words of Gustafsson (2006) successful management requires knowledge e.g. business administration, marketing, work organization, statistics, practical-productive knowledge and leaders should be able to combine scientific knowledge with practical and productive knowledge and see guests' expectations and the entirety of the meal. There is a potential to increase sales and productivity at the lunch restaurants with zero investment by using only managerial ways.

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