
*THE IMPACT OF MARKETING UPON THE
KITCHEN ORGANIZATION, OPERATION AND
MANAGEMENT. COULD THAT IMPROVE THE
CUSTOMERS' SATISFACTION?*

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ABSTRACT

Marketing is a science that probes our life more and more. It was a matter of time till the field of restaurants, were conquered. Although the restaurant marketing is well known today, the direct impact and influence from the marketing to the food production is quite limited. The marketing procedures are used in a few kitchen tasks such as menu planning and menu engineering. The great issue is whether marketing can affect the organization, operation and management of a kitchen directly. And let us suppose that this is feasible, can it lead to increased levels of the guests' satisfaction? It is essential that we know who we are, who is the guest, develop the equivalent profiles, study the reasoning for consumption and finally manipulate the production process in a way that will provide the potential buyer with a product that is irresistible.

Keywords: Marketing, Kitchen, Customer satisfaction, Personalization of the product

INTRODUCTION

The marketing process provides an enterprise with the ability to customize their products and services to the clients' needs and wants (Kotler, 1991). The beginning of that process defines the profile of the clientele. At first the marketer needs to take under consideration the common characteristics of several groups of people, regroup those characteristics and finally create segments of the general social group (Laloumis, 1998). Those segments are parts of the society that demonstrate a number of characteristics which are combined among them on a different logical basis. This determines a group of people which for example belong to an age spread from the early twenties to the early fifties. In actual life this age spread displays a number of differences, which lead to a completely opposite consuming behavior. Within the marketing process though, those ages can be bound by other common characteristics such as a tendency to search for brand new experiences that lead them to be willing to consume a certain product or service (Yankelovich, 2006).

CULINARY MARKET SEGMENTATION

The nature of the culinary product is obviously met as a component in any kind of tourist product. The basic need for food will be fulfilled. Additionally, there are tourists who will seek a different experience out of their basic need. There are also tourists that travel basing their destination choice on the food and drink that they will find there. The appropriate segmentation under today's circumstances, are presented by Ignatov (2003) which breaks them down to three specific target groups. Those target groups are people who are interested in food, those who are interested in wine and those who are interested in both (Kivela et al, 2005).

It is proven that culinary tourists, are quite older than generic tourists, more highly educated and they tend to spend an average of the double amount than the generic tourist. (Wade et al, 2005, Hall et al, 2003). There are two main directions in which culinary tourists spread. These directions are the food and the wine. Culinary tourists demonstrate significant differences among visitors interested in food-based tourism, wine-based tourism, and food and wine-based tourism. Those segments differ in demographic characteristics, travel activities

and spending during travel. Culinary tourists who aim to both food and wine tend to have the highest socio-economic profiles, engaged in more activities than the other two sectors (Ignatov, 2003).

Middleton (et al, 2001) indicates that there are seven main ways to segment markets in the tourism market:

- The purpose of travel
- The buyer needs, motivations, demands and anticipations
- The consuming behavior
- The demographic, economic, and geographic profile
- The psychographic profile
- The geodemographic profile
- And the price

On the other hand Buckley (1993) defines that those characteristics can be divided into three categories.

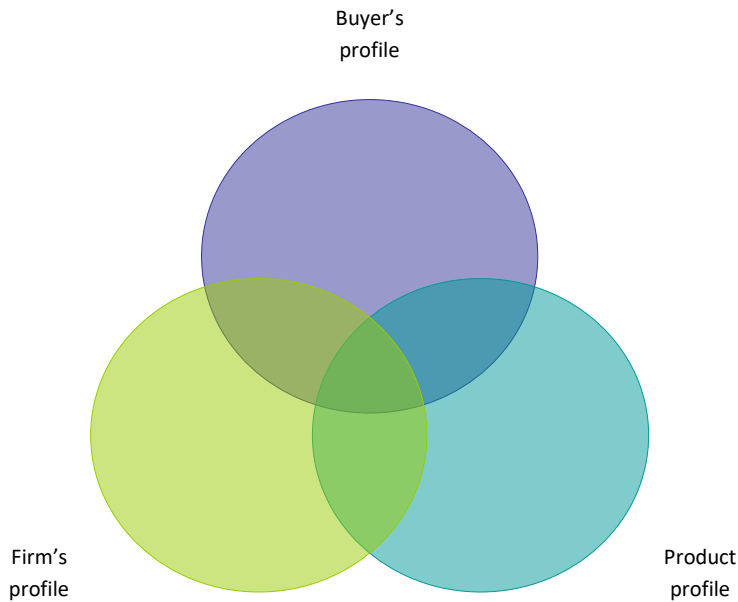
- Demographic
- Psychographic and
- Behavioristic

Those characteristics suffer the regrouping process providing a certain model of a large group of people which demonstrate common facts that lead them to specific consuming behaviors. That allows the enterprise to specify the product accordingly.

The segmentation process analyzes and reorganizes the characteristics of the enterprenual profile (Auty, 1992). The enterprenual profile is basically consisted of a list of characteristics which translate the firm's identity into the customer's consuming language. Those characteristics are the following (Scanlon, 1985, Minor et al, 1984):

- The type of the enterprise
- The category of the enterprise

- The cuisine
- The fame
- And the product



Those characteristics can provide the buyer with an accurate image of what to expect from the restaurant. On the other hand the enterprise will profit out of this comparison a more detailed aspect of the potential buyer's profile which will enable the marketer to design and develop a product or service that will satisfy the target group (Seaberg, 1983). According to Buckley (1993) the enterprise must go through a tunnel that will get the firm much closer to the target group. This tunnel is crossed in four steps:

1. Perceiving,
2. Understanding,

3. Stimulating,
4. And satisfying the customer's needs

The enterprise is provided with the appropriate data that describe best the customer's needs. Apart from the needs, wants and expectations must be taken under consideration (Laloumis, 2002). It is an expected reaction that consumers easily jump from satisfaction to expectation and from expectation to demand.

It is a major step reading the guest's body language to perceive and understand his needs. The buyer may be in a hurry, may be on a diet, may be on a budget, may not understand the menu or may face some quality problems. In all cases the personnel must provide the customer a reason for consumption (Smith, 1990).

At this point the restaurant possesses all the information needed in order to develop the product profile. The product is the chain part that bonds the buyers with the enterprise, by studying and comparing the equivalent profiles.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumer behavior is the procedure via a buyer comes to a decision of what to purchase, the criticism of the choice and the potential of repeating this purchase.

According to Assael (1992) consumer behavior is the humans' reaction to a process of exchange.

Wilkie (1990), declares that consumer behavior is the one that potential buyers demonstrate while they research, buy, use, evaluate and accept or reject a product or service depending on their needs' satisfaction.

As Peter (et al, 1990) indicates consumer behavior is the procedure of decision making and reactions during a purchase of goods or services.

Mowen (1990) defines consumer behavior as all the activities that are relevant to the purchase of a product. This includes the thoughts and stimulus

before, during and after the purchase of a product along with each factor affecting that procedure.

The first step for the buyer is to define the needs and wants which have to be satisfied. Right after the buyer collects information referring to the available products and services that can satisfy those needs, evaluates the source of the information and comes to a decision. The buyer purchases the product, uses the item, compares the expectations with the actual experience, develops a critic opinion about his purchase and finally rates the overall experience as worth repeating or not (Siomkos, 1994, Gabbott et al., 1994).

THE CONSUMER

The consumer is the one who decides whether a product is worth buying or not. There are four basic types of consumers (Laurent et al, 1985).

- The economic type. This type is totally rational, basing all decisions on the best balance between spent and profit, knowing all the needed details and being untouched by external stimulus.
- The pathetic type. This type represents the guided person who decides according to what the external stimulus suggest.
- The knowledgeable type. The information collector, being more down to earth compared to the economic type.
- The emotional type. The one who decides depending on the emotion.

Consumers might demonstrate a mixture of characteristics depending on the external social, family and financial environment (Siomkos, 1994). The external environment cannot be measured thus an approach to define sound types of consumers is notrational.

DECISION MAKING

The decision making process begins with the stimulus which declares an unsatisfied need (Moorman, 1990). The consumer will gather the appropriate

information, come up with a shortlist of potential goods or services, analyzes the positive and negative facts and comes to a decision (Keller et al, 1987). The quality and quantity of the information play a key role in the decision making. Higher quality of information, lead to better decisions. Quantity wise it is not always the same. In some cases the volume of the information, tend to confuse the consumer (Hauser et al, 1993).

In the F&B sector the decision making process is randomly implemented since the buyer's knowledge regarding the product is very limited. In this case the main factor that leads to a decision is the restaurant's fame. An important factor is that the product is evaluated mostly after the consumption. It is preferred by the enterprises that the product is bought in advance to the consumption.

CONSUMER PERCEPTION

The consumer's perception in comparison with the actual reality, play a significant role in the buying process.

The perception is the procedure when a buyer makes sense out of a certain stimulus (Siomkos, 1994). The same applies to situations when the experience makes sense for a consumer.

RESTAURANT MARKETING

The marketing process aims to draw a landscape in the market, in which the most efficient position will be selected as a target for the restaurant to accomplish. This will enable the enterprise to obtain an advantage when communicating the product to the target group and being visited by the target group. The main target is to achieve a minimum level of sales which can guarantee a sustainable operation. There is a number of tools which under proper usage, can contribute a considerable increase in the sales and the income. The product promotion is an important part of selling (Breitfuss, 2008). There are a few techniques that can increase the sales in a restaurant (Breitfuss, 2008, Κοσσένας, 2007). Those techniques are the following:

THE EXTRA PRODUCT

This simple technique is broadly adopted by fast food restaurants. the employee communicates possible combinations as a new potential or a reminder. in case of repeated purchases the guest will go for some of those combinations.

Demonstrate knowledge of the product

Trying to sell a drink might not be as accurate as it should. Trying to sell a specific drink that matches the guest's order proves that the waiter possesses knowledge of the product. This will develop a relationship of trust among the guest and the enterprise.

Offering

Offer, suggest. Wear a pretty smile and introduce the product to the guest. The potential buyer is more likely to expand the order if he is not dealing with the unknown.

Show Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is essential. It develops the image of an honest person. On top of that the message that the waiter believes in the product assures the guest that his needs will be met by all means. There is also a strengthening of the trust between the waiter and the guest.

Listen

Listening is a difficult task. Letting the sound get through the ears is not enough. In many situations people hear the words but they do not listen at all. Listening is the major step that can lead to understanding the buyer's needs and getting sound knowledge of your buyer.

Know your guest

Knowing the guest equals to knowing the needs, wants and demands. That information can customize the product to the guest's needs and guarantee the sales delivering the message "we can offer exactly what you want".

Assume the sale

This state of selling offers the buyer the choice of not choosing. For example a waiter can ask the guest if there is a need for water. Since the guest replies positively the waiter asks if there is a preference between still and sparkling water. There is no reference on tap water. The waiter gives the guest the choice to buy, hiding the existing alternative of not buying. Statistically, it is rare that the guest will head for tap water.

Incentives

This method aims to provide the consumer with the needed motivation in order to achieve a better sale agreement.

Ask

This technique enables the employee to develop a more efficient image of details that customers seek. Those details create a database that will lead to personalizing the product to each and every buyer.

Downselling

This is a quite similar technique to up-selling. In this case the waiter suggests the most expensive alternative. If the guest turns this alternative down, the waiter goes for the second most expensive. The achievement in this technique is that the guest will most probably settle in the middle between his original

intention and the waiter's suggestion. Thereafter there is not a direct sale, but a direct increase in the average spent.

Crossselling

In this case there is needed a state of trust between the guest and the waiter. The concept is that the waiter tries to lead the guest to a completely different choice against the buyer's determination for a certain product. For both down-selling and cross-selling the negotiation relies on the superior quality of the product.

An important alternative is that the selling techniques contribute a considerable value to the consuming experience. This derives from the perspective that the additional sales tend to meet the needs and wants that the consumer was not aware of until this time. Thus the consuming experience becomes rich and pleasant beyond the point that it was expected in the first place.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PASS

The marketing process can be implemented effectively enough in the dining room of a restaurant. The question is what is happening on the other side of the pass? It is well known that the marketing claimed a large field on the menu planning process (Seaberg, 1983). The menu is a tool via which the marketing reaches the kitchen. Is it though possible that the marketing can affect the kitchen in a direct manner?

MENU PLANNING AND ENGINEERING

The menu is not a simple list of dishes that are offered in a restaurant. It is mostly a selling tool (Minor et al, 1984). This tool is based on marketing procedures which reflect the needs of the clientele. Thus the menu plays an important communicative role, which can broaden to mild advertising by using pictures or impressive description of the available dishes.

Historically the first menu was the *escriteau*. The *escriteau* was a simple communicative list between the aristocrats and the chefs during the 19th century.

This list was the guideline of the dishes that should be prepared, while it provided the appropriate information for the ingredients to be supplied as well. The local restaurant, attempted to flutter their clientele by using an *escriteau* in a poster size hanging outside the entrance (Green et al, 1978). During the 1880's and the 1890's the *escriteau*, moved on to the table, receiving today's size and transformed to what is known today as menu. The first book that contained commercial menus in their former image was written by Hanna Glasse in 1747 (Scanlon, 1985). The menu as it is today was developed in the post war years.

The menu is developed in two phases. The menu planning and the menu engineering phase (Scanlon, 1985).

The menu is the prime kitchen item that is mostly affected and manipulated by marketing. There is a number of factors that affect the menu planning process. Those factors are (Scanlon, 1985, Seaberg, 1983, Fuller et al, 1991):

- The type of the enterprise
- The category of the enterprise
- The target group
- The cuisine
- Variety of ingredients
- Variety of colors
- Diet balanced
- Tempting the senses
- The employees' capabilities
- The equipment capabilities
- The marketability
- Profitability

It is obvious that marketing plays a very important role in the menu planning process. The key factors that determine the elimination process, through

which the menu is created, are the clientele profile, the entrepreneurial profile and the product profile.

The target group is analysed above. The product itself, regardless the assistance from any advertising campaigns, will definitely summon potential customers who do not belong to the adopted target group (Laloumis, 1998). This will result in two possible outcomes. Either the target group will be enriched absorbing the additional guests redefining the overall clientele profile, or the target group will reject the additional potential groups in a long mild process. There are several examples of target groups that cannot be easily put together.

The menu engineering process on the other hand, runs procedures that monitor the efficiency and the effectiveness of the menu whilst on production aiming to correct any mistakes that lead to an uneven operation (Dittmer et al, 1989).

The menu engineering process uses two main pieces of data in order to complete the checking process. Those are the profitability of a menu item and its popularity (Kotchevar, 1987). A basic information system that allows the enterprise to draw accurate conclusions is the sales statistics. The sales statistics provide the appropriate data for the estimation of a menu item's popularity. Additionally the menu items that display high popularity can be analyzed on the basis of their characteristics. Herein the goal is to analyze the menu item and specify the highest number of possible characteristics. The category of the item is not as important as other factors such as the rich or poor flavor and aroma, the pricing, the complexity or simplicity of the flavors and the presentation of the menu item. The determination of the demanded product character is based on the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the clientele (Buckley, 1993). The more educated, well – living and highly ranked in the social status is the target group, the more complex product will be required.

Kitchen organization

The kitchen organization expands on two levels. The first one is the layout organization (Laloumis, 1998) and the second one is the personnel organization (Laloumis, 2002).

The main factor that determines the layout of the kitchen is the menu (Fosket et al, 2003). Rationality and reasonability in the kitchen layout oblige that the equipment that should be used must be selected in a manner that will meet the operational needs further on. The equipment layout should be adapted to the available space providing increased levels of utility for both the equipment itself and the available room (Eshbach, 1979). It is essential that the layout will not create obstacles to the production process. The kitchen departments should be clearly defined in all levels. The basic productive equipment should be combined by the equivalent supportive equipment so as to create a post that will enable a person or a team to operate without facing the interference of other employees. For example, the grill post should be organized around the griller along with the appropriate passes, fridges, microwave ovens and any other needed equipment. This layout must output an even productive operation diminishing the need for another employee to invade into that post. Thus the operation can run smoothly without unnecessary frustrating incidents (Knight et al, 1979). A manner in which the marketing process could affect directly the equipment organization of the kitchen is the demand for a more detailed plan of satisfying the guests' needs. Thus the equipment layout could possibly follow a path of aiming to customize the product the buyers' needs such as offering slower or faster service. This can be achieved by manipulating certain elements such as the flow of work, time management and the use of portable equipment accordingly. The marketing can directly come to decisions relevantly the production process and setting the equipment in the appropriate order.

The same rationality is employed in personnel organization. The number and the specialization of the employees are determined by the operational needs, the forecasting process and the menu to a minor extent (Laloumis, 2002). There are three major issues over which marketing plays a significant role indirectly to the personnel organization procedure. Those issues are the following:

- The personnel responsibilities
- The team work
- The communication with the serving staff

The marketing possesses a limited list of methods that can affect the kitchen organization directly. The total contribution marketing can demonstrate upon the personalization of the product to each guest's needs is high, perceiving that this contribution makes the difference to customer satisfaction and increased sales.

Kitchen operation

As kitchen operation is referred the actual production process that outputs the consumable product. The operation is the sector which suffers the most influence from the marketing process (Fosket, 2003). The operation process is the physical continuation of the organization process. The kitchen organization quality reflects the smoothness of the operation carried out.

Marketing increases the feasibility of interference with the kitchen itself on the operational basis. The marketing process can exploit a large volume of data which derive from the service operation (Minor, 1984). That data contain opinions, demands, preferences and a detailed list of the guests' needs. The restaurant manager cooperates with the kitchen manager, analyze that data and translate it into guidelines, orders and information that will allow the employees to take steps towards the production of a dish that reflects the buyer's needs, wants and demands at most.

The production process can be adjusted to the customers' needs evenly at every level that is required. The information from the manager to the employee, will determine the speed of the production according to the desired speed of service, how well it is done, the levels of salt and pepper, the heavily or lightly spiced dish, details regarding the presentation and any other detail that could bring the dish as closer as possible to the guest's image (Knight, 1979, Laloumis, 2002).

Kitchen management

The kitchen management process can be broken down to 6 basic tasks (Laloumis, 2002). Those tasks are:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the organization
- Monitor the efficiency of the operation
- Track down any problems
- Analyze the problems
- Take action to solve the problem
- Evaluate the improvement

At this point it is necessary to make clear that the aim is not to provide a kitchen manager's job description. For that reason any tasks which have to do with organizing or operating the kitchen along with menu planning and engineering processes are set aside since they were analyzed above.

Research method

Semi structured interviews were used to collect the primary data. A number of three interviews on four star hotels and an equal number on five star hotels were carried out in the region of Athens. The nature of the objective leads the researcher to the adoption of that method since the required information was not to be discussed on a narrow manner.

There are some limitations to that process. Primarily the marketing in the regional market of hotels has barely found its way to the kitchen. An additional limitation was the heavy schedule of the head chefs and the F&B managers which led to mostly telephone interviews.

The interviews were consisted of three sections. The first section aims to define the organization, operation and management of the kitchen. At this stage it

is important to be clearly defined the exact enterprenual environment. The role of the culinary product in the overall plan for the customer satisfaction issue is a key element.

The second section aims to define the marketing impact both in a direct and an indirect manner to the food production process. The researcher's scope is to obtain an accurate picture of the practical application of the marketing within the kitchen along with the potential reconsideration of the operational factors.

The third section aims to define the impact of the marketing process and the kitchen overall function upon customer satisfaction and vice versa. Here lays an attempt to measure the differences in guests' criticism and their response to the customization of the product.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed mainly by using four tools. Those tools are key-words, key-phrases, key-ideas and key meanings. The process focuses on the data details and elements that provide sufficient information to build a part of the answer. Further on the usable elements were reorganized and regrouped in order to provide a fully comprehensible image of the final objective.

Discussion of the findings

As seen through the secondary research the marketing process analyzes the customers' profile, the enterprenual profile and the product profile. This tactic reorganizes the picture of how things should be. The same process needs a considerable time period for the market research, the planning, the implementation and the evaluation of the outcomes to be completed. Furthermore marketing adopts a specific logic which displays a long term character. On the other hand food production process is a group of tasks with a short term character. It is a difference the fact that the kitchen operation is based on the day to day running. The researching procedures that are adopted by the

kitchen logic are different to the marketing logic heading for completely different data between each other. Additionally the organization displays everyday results, assists the everyday operation and the only long term procedure is the managerial one.

The marketing process aims to draw all the necessary information that will lead the restaurant to produce the best possible product, while keeping an eye on possible changes that have to be made. On the other hand the kitchen product bases on standardization. Either in favor to the idea, that the guest will not have any surprises, or in favor to the “automated productive operation”, the kitchen cannot follow the marketing reasoning.

There are very few details on the everyday kitchen operation that the marketing may manipulate. The marketing mostly affect the menu planning and engineering processes and some parts of the product planning and development such as pricing and a general framework that will define the product profile.

There is a high number of factors affecting the food production, which cannot be manipulated. The inflow of the guests, the possibility of having malfunctioned pieces of equipment and the constant chance of the employees making a mistake are a few of those. Thus the operation is flexible and in addition to the organization and management process there are plan Bs and Cs in case of an unexpected problem. On the contrary the marketing process employs a poorly maneuverable approach. The adjustment to any changes in the micro or macro environment is executed in a low rate.

The employees in the food production sector have limited access to the clientele. This leads to drawing information indirectly through the service or the marketing personnel. This leads easily to misunderstandings. Direct communication between the guest and the kitchen personnel can provide a much more effective tackle of a complaint and improve the consuming experiences. Moreover the indirect communication reduces the detailed comprehension of the guests’ needs, wants and demands. Hence the kitchen staff may not be able to come to secure conclusions regarding the product details that need reconsidering concerning the exact characteristics of a dish.

The marketing process is not treated always as a must. It is still today a common practice, that a chef will develop the menu and the edible part of the culinary product according to his ideas. The main selling tool in the restaurant is designed by a person who does not rely on information relevantly the guests' demands and needs. Thus the opportunity of meeting the guests' needs is eliminated resulting to minor customer satisfaction.

Conclusions

The final results are important for several reasons. It is a success story for a restaurant to keep all the guests happy and satisfied. The marketing process aims at creating the appropriate circumstances under which this success story will be a reality. Marketing tends to affect the procedures where there is a direct communication between the guest and an employee. The marketing process has very few things to do with departments such as the kitchen, the supplies and the housekeeping. Though information regarding consumers' needs, wants and demands is considered to be crucial, in the food production sector the tactic is to rely on a chef's ideas without any guarantee that those ideas much the consumers' ones. A major issue is that the scholar training of chefs in Greece offers no marketing courses. This results in a heavy lack of knowledge on the marketing field from the food production employees. The working experience that is gained in the future covers a part of this lack though in an unorganized manner leading to poor usage of that knowledge. The final conclusion is that the meaning of customer satisfaction and the outcome of that is treated as a good idea and not as an important goal to be achieved. The marketing process can play a minor direct role in the kitchen organization, operation and management, though it can make the difference from success to failure based on the increased customers' satisfaction and repeated sales.

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