

ETHICAL MENU QUALITY IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Quality is a category which identifies products characteristics with an aim to satisfy consumers needs. Today food and beverages operations support systematic approaches in quality requirements fulfillment. According to Kotler (1996) there are several components of quality. One of them is ethical quality or quality of trust. This paper is dealing with ethical menu quality in providing food and beverages as a part of hospitality industry. Ethical menu quality is connected with menu accuracy and food safety issues. This includes origin of ingredients, method of preparation, quantity representation, and use of brand names. Most of them are subjects of legislation and they are determined by law procedures, but also all of them are matter of ethical practice and behavior. Menu planners are bound by ethics and truth in menu regulations to prevent fraud and mislead their customers. The paper also contains results of conducted research about ethical menu quality issues, the ways realizing of this quality element as well as its weakness in food and beverage offer in one of the most popular tourist center in Republic of Macedonia.

Keywords: quality, ethic, menu, hospitality, food, consumers

1. ETHICAL MENU QUALITY IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Hospitality is one of the fastest growing industry in the world today. The border meaning of the term hospitality industry might refer to any group that is engaged in travel and tourism, lodging, food service, meetings, conventions and expositions, leisure and recreation. But the two main segments of this industry are the lodging industry, also called the hotel industry, and the food and beverage industry, also called restaurant industry.

These two basic segments of hospitality industry are high complex and diverse. Hotels may be classified according to location, price, and types of service offered like: city center hotels, resort hotels, airport hotels, freeway hotels and motels, economy hotels, extended stay hotels, all-suite hotels (Walker, 1996). Of course,

other hotels classifications can be made, although many countries have no formal government classifications. In Macedonia according to the law procedures the lodging operations are divided into: basic operations and complementary operations (Catering industry law 62/2004).

The provision of food and beverages is one of the oldest services associated with lodging establishments. The provision of food and beverages facilities in hotels ranges from a self service style often used for breakfast service to full silver service used at the luxury and of the market. Other commercial food and beverage outlets are restaurants and snack bars, public houses, fast food and take-away, travel catering, clubs, function and event catering (Davis, Lockwood, Stone, 1998). The same law procedures, classify the food and beverages operations in Macedonia like: restaurants, bars, canteens, and other operations. Lodging, and food and beverages operations are categorized by stars.

The occupation of this paper is the quality as a factor for consumer attracting. It's about a ethical quality in hospitality industry, crated through ethical quality in menus. Menus as a starting point for determination of production, service and managerial responsibilities in every food and beverage operation.

2. THE QUALITY CHALLENGE

We live in an age when our senses every day meet information about different products. For satisfying one consumer need a huge number of products exists, or as Kotler, Bowen, and Makens (1996) say - We will call all the products that can satisfy this need the product choice set. Very often these products look like as if resembling: similar tourist destination, similar amusement parks, similar hotels rooms, similar menus... But what the consumers nowadays look for the most and which is of the same time the most important in product selection is the quality. Quality as a good design, good performances, safety, sustainability, value.

The general definitions for quality, start from the level of consumers need satisfaction by the product, and indicators for that satisfaction. The most accepted definition explain quality concept as an integration of total products features which characterized their ability to satisfy specific consumers need. And even more than that, nowadays quality is seen in "stronger light": quality is to fulfill and to excel consumers expectations (Dukovski 2003).

The recognition of quality importance in a struggle for attracting consumers result in efforts for systematic approaches towards quality, which evaluated parallel with

technical and technology development. It started with quality inspection, than quality control, quality assurance, to total quality management. The techniques and approaches in total quality management include the active development of quality culture and development of change management problem solving, quality analysis and quality improvement skills (Davis et al.,1998). In this concept, quality is a team realized. That leads in organizational culture changing.

In one of the quality definition given by Webster (1987), quality is a moral trait or characteristic. According to Kotler et al. (1996) there several components of quality: product features, freedom from deficiencies, functional quality, technical quality and societal (ethical) quality. Concept like this is very convenient for hospitality industry, especially in providing food and beverages. Foodservice industry has some specifics which lead to establishing and maintaining different standards for quality purpose. These specifics emerged from tangible and intangible product elements, high labor content, different production methods, short cycle of food and beverage production, limited shelf life of raw ingredients, as well as presence of customers (Davis et al. 1998).

Societal or ethical quality is a quality of trust. Moral and ethics are closed connected. Ethics emphasis on the determination of right and wrong. Moral is a integration of rules and norms in that society as the most convenient and the most accurate for intercommunication regulation. Moral is expressed through honor and ethics. Moral is one of the special and very old form of society consciousness (Ekonomiska i poslovna enciklopedija,1994).

Contemporary customers are more and more informed about nutritional food value, and food safety issues, as a result of dynamic development of food industry and also foodservice industry. This create obligations of adequate food offer and quality as a part of integrated hospitality product. Food and beverages have to fulfill quality standards to assure that food will not harm the consumers when it is prepared and eaten according to its intended use. Ethical responsibilities have to be considered during product development in order to avoid situations of negative publicity. The knowledge of professionals have to be recognized and practiced by foodservice operations and used in food and beverage production and serving.

Also, to fulfill ethical requirements and government regulations, great attention has to be put to menu accuracy. Every statement incorporated in menu content or orally transferred to the customers must be true. Food and beverages operations are bound by ethics and truth in menu in order not to fraud their customers.

3.MENU IN A RESTAURANT CONCEPT

Menu as an element of restaurant concept (besides location, price, atmosphere and ambiance), emerged from market research. The integrated concept expresses the restaurant image. The menu is the major communication device that projects the personality and concept of a restaurant, it is an important cost control, internal marketing, and merchandising tool (Miller and Pavesic, 1996).

All food and beverage management systems begin with the menu. The menu is in the center of the food service operations. It determines the equipment needs, skill level and number of staff, type of food served, amount of inventory, size of kitchen, and type of service. Many food and beverage operations have a variety of menus for different meal periods and seasons of the year. The menu has to be an output of efforts made to identify and satisfy requirements and wishes of customers.

According to the type of foodservice operation there are several types of menus. Two main classes of menus are a la carte (from the card) and table d'hote (table of host). Fine dining restaurants usually have both types of menus complementary to each other. Fast food restaurants.

Menu content, traditionally based on classic cuisine is being influenced by (Gillespie 2001):

- Food trends, fads and fashions
- The relationship between health and eating
- Special diets
- Cultural and religions influences
- Vegetarianism

All these factors include ethical demands which have to be met in order to satisfy contemporary customers wishes and needs.

4.FRAUD CONCERNS IN MENU

In writing a menu, it is important to take great care to ensure the total accuracy of all information included. It has to be assured that customers will not be mislead or fraud. Also, all kind of misrepresenting the sold items by foodservice operations, has to be prevented. Some ethical concerns are represented through care about health nutrition, diets, safety food and beverages, quantity representation etc. In

order to fulfill these requirements several criteria for ethical menu evaluation can be identified (Wallace 1996):

1. Controlling of geographical points of ingredients origin. This statement in menus generally has to be avoided unless there is an assurance for steady supply of that item. Geographical origins of ingredients must be provable by either package labels or invoices. For example Ohrid Trout must come from Ohrid Lake, not from Prespa Lake.

2. The degree of menu item descriptions usage like: imported, homemade, natural, real and fresh. These kinds of descriptions have to be used with great care.

3. Brand or label substitutions in purchasing by supplier.

4. Healthy food offer in menus.

5. Food safety.

6. Determine food and beverage standards like - Standard purchase specifications, standard recipes, standard yields, standard portion sizes, standard portion costs (Ninemeier 2001).

7. Preventing theft when bills are paid.

5. RESEARCH: ETHICAL MENU QUALITY IN HOTELS IN OHRID REGION

The subject of this investigation was ethical menu quality in menus in Ohrid Region. The aim of this research was the determination of the ethical menu quality in hotels menus in Ohrid Region through indicators which were previously signed as a criteria for ethical menu evaluation.

The research was conducted in three and four star hotels in Ohrid Region while 67 managers were questioned.

The research results

1. Geographical point of origin. According to the research conducted, almost one third of questioned managers answered that their hotels substituted ingredients with specific point of geographical origin with some other similar products they think that quality of substitutes is good. On the other hand, more than two thirds firmly state that they respect and practice truth in geographical point of origin.

2. As far as controlling procedure for the geographical points of origin is concerned, 34,33% of managers answered that their hotels ask for geographical origin certificate. Almost 12% trust the suppliers because of long term good cooperation, and more than 50% evaluated these kinds of purchased products only according their characteristics.

3. In regard of the degree of menu items descriptions implementation like: imported, homemade, natural, real and fresh, the conducted research show that:

- The most used menu-item description (among previously mentioned, and offered in the questionnaire) are: fresh and homemade. But also the research results implicated that 10% of the managers confirmed that they served canned juice instead of fresh squeeze while in the menu was clearly stated that they serve "fresh juice".

- The less used menu item descriptions (among offered in the questionnaire) are: imported and real.

- The description - fresh is most used for menu items like: vegetable and fruit salads, fish and meat; Description - natural for juices; Description - domestic for menu items from national bakery, grill meat, wines; Description - imported for sea food and fish.

4. About the issue: Brand or label substitutions in purchasing (by the supplier) 25% of questioned managers answered that their hotels were very rarely misled by the supplier in terms of product brand or label. The rest answered that their hotels were never misled by suppliers as far as this issue is concerned.

5. Healthy food offer in menus. Conducted research has shown that: 43,28% of questioned managers said that their menus contained menu items which represent healthy nutrition. 44,78% do not offer healthy food items, but they have an opinion of necessity for including this kind of food in the near future. No one answered that this food is not necessary.

6. The results about safety food issue shows that managers do not have any dilemma about food safety standards implementation. Only 22,39% are in implementation process of HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point), and 77,61% practice completely implemented HACCP.

7. About determining food and beverage standards or level of expecting performance which among other aims, have to produce to produce ethical quality for consumers, the research indicated the following situation:

- Standard purchase specifications 20,09%

- Standard recipes 10,04%

- Standard yields 31,88%

- Standard portion sizes 10,92%

- Standard serving glass volume 16,59%

- Standard portion costs 10,48%

8. Preventing theft when bills are paid. All operations where research was conducted use computer payment system and issue fiscal bill for every product sold.

6. CONCLUSION

One of the most important factors for success in all fields including hospitality in these days competing world is a quality. Quality has a several components among

which ethical or societal quality is a quality of trust. In diverse hospitality industry it can be reached in many areas and one of them is provision for food and beverages.

According to the presented research several conclusions are made:

Geographical points of origin, as one of the criteria for menu ethical quality evaluation shows that 29,85% of hotels substituted ingredients with specific geographical origin, and 70% do not do that. But geographical origin certificates are asked from supplier only in 34,33% cases. That shows that a big chance for hotels to be frauded by the suppliers occurs and indirectly this kind of fraud can be transferred to the customers.

In regard of accurate statements in menus, investigated through some menu items descriptions, the general conclusion is that hotels pay attention to this issue. But they usually use some description like - homemade, especially for menu items from nationally bakery, but in many cases they don't prepare these kinds of products on the premises, and they purchase them already prepared.

The results about Brand or label substitutions (by suppliers), shows that hotels are very rarely misled by the supplier in purchasing. That means if they do not do frauds in this field, their customers get the quality guaranteed by brand and label. The results about question of healthy food offer in menus, show that hotels take care about their customers health, because none of the questioned managers said that healthy items are not necessary. The results about safety food offer clearly shows that safety food is obligation for hotels in Ohrid Region, not an option. The results about determining food and beverage standards and preventing theft when bills are paid shows that hotels follow government regulations.

Some of the menu ethical criteria are subjects of government regulations. For example the points of origin of ingredients in Macedonia are regulated in the Law of Industrial Property (2009), as well as in the Law for Consumer Protection (2000). The quantity of representation which means that item stated on the menu must accurately reflected the actual size of item served is regulated in the Catering Industry Law (2004). These law procedures also regulate the payment system in foodservice operations. Safety of food and beverages is regulated in the Law for safety food (2010). But many ethical obligations are matter of foodservice operations awareness and they have to be integrated in their everyday professional routine and behavior. There is no law which can regulate all details in foodservice business and it is well known that this business is a business of details.

So, the complete ethical menu quality can be only delivered through understanding and commitment to quality requirements of all employees in order to exceed customers demand and expectations.

As it is stated in Global Codes of Ethics in Tourism: Tourism professionals, insofar as it depends on them, should show concern in cooperation with the public authorities, for the security and safety, accident prevention, health protection and food safety of those who seek their services; likewise, they should accept the reporting obligations prescribed by the national regulations and pay fair compensation in event of failure to observe their contractual obligations. (World Tourism Organization, 1999)

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