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RESTAURANT PRODUCT IMPROVEMENT

UDK:640.432:658.8

Restaurants are the places where the greatest part of catering material products and services are realized. This is where the specific sail is obtained, but also consumption. However, restaurants are not only the places where people eat. They are the places where people go to satisfy certain social needs for interaction. Because of this restaurants product shows a variety of different products and services, being produced and mixed intended to satisfy consumer's demands. This complex whole of products and services has continually to be improved, enriched and modernised.

In this paper we refer to the possibilities for restaurant product improvement through these aspects: offer instruments as means of guest's communication with product assortment, ambient and atmosphere as a complex of various kinds of subtle communications with the visitors, and realisation of part of material products in the kitchen by „suggestive selling“ model.

Key words: restaurant product, menu, food items list, guests, communication

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourist product unit almost can't be imagined without presence of restaurant services. The obligatory part in the frame of tourist product is evident also in the positions about conceptional definition of tourist product that can be found in literature.

The theoretical definitions of tourist product determine the restaurant product as a part of the „amalgam“ made by tourists while buying [1, 107] ; as a part of the receptive factors which are used among the rest by the tourist offer participants at the creation of tourist product [2, 32], or as a partial tourist product [3, 109]. Restaurant product can also be treated as integrated, having in mind its complete content, constituted by numerous synergetic partial products. In fact „restaurants are one of the few places where we use all of senses to enjoy the experience. Our taste, sight, smell, hearing and touch are all employed to savour the food, service and atmosphere of the restaurant“ [4, 156].

To reach the goal of being in harmony with continuous consumers innovated needs, the restaurant product content has to be continually improved.

2. OFFER INSTRUMENTS COMMUNICATION MEANS WITH PRODUCT ASSORTMENT

The material product offer in restaurant business is carried out through specific instruments for this use, which in catering practice is named as: menu, list of food items, beverage tariff, wine card etc. This offer instruments represent the means of guest communication with product assortment.

However, the offer means have to represent something more than a mere announcement - what the kitchen offers for sale. When they are properly designed, they will have to inform the consumers, but also to induce them to buy. Namely „A menu serves more than one purpose: it is a source of information and a marketing tool“ [5, 108].

So, the guests decision about consumption of certain products in great part depends on their successfulness in professional creating and successfulness of their image. Ignoring the rules of their compose, we'll just remark that the most important matter to think about is the consumers segment they are applied to. That are their needs, desires, habits and ways of food consumption. According to this an appropriate offer instruments designing is carried out.

As a marketing tool, the instruments, especially realise their role through their promotive aspects. This aspect is reflected by their image, graphic representation, their material of production. For ex. well thoughtful and designed menu cards represent fine propaganda means, which guests like to take out with them, to show and keep. Good offer instruments in catering are most all original and unique, having great effect, are remembered and initiate wish with guests to be a sort of guest property souvenir from the tourist stay. Because of that „... it is wrong for many hotels to be supplied with offer instruments of serial production (average tariffs, list of food items, breakfast cards etc.) from certain firms with serial production, so this instruments become some kind of standard.“ [6, 190]

When speaking about a good image of offer instruments, the linguistic aspect should be point out. From the linguistic point of view attention has to be put on two principles: a) orthography - that is spelling with no errors, and b) stylistic pure language. The guest doesn't have to need a vocabulary or a interpreter reviewing the offer instruments. This means that they have to be understandable for any layman.

The orthography also includes the correct punctuation. Some would probably comment that this goes without saying, but practice shows the contrary.

Putting together more different languages must be avoided. Offer tools decorated with heterogeneous English, French, German words produce negative effect. Foreign names can be used only if they are unavoidable or if they are already used in that form in the language of the receptive tourist country. Typical foreign national specialities should not be translated (cordon bleu). It's also natural not to translate the original name of certain garnishes for whose explanation a whole recipe would be

needed (Stroganoff). Stylistic epithets, tautologies¹, too many superlatives (mlado pile, Edellachs, junges Milchlamm) are inconvenient with the offer instruments. From stylistic point of view the offer tools could be increased by small drawings, citations, verses, short historical surveys of the restaurant or the place and the like. By this the aimed individual character would be better attained.

The linguistic aspect of the offer instruments is often neglected and so the occurrence of errors is not rare. The seriousness and professional aspect of the instruments has to be retained, a lector or linguist has to be consulted in advance.

The above quoted principles are also important for the interpretation of the offer tools applied for the foreign guests. The language in translations has to be clear and with no mistakes. For the orthography in the offer instruments in German language Duden [7] is competent. The names of home national items are not to be translated, otherwise they'll change their national character. In the translated instrument the original name should be given, an information that it is a local speciality, followed by a short and clear explanation in parenthesis.

According to one research² [8, 310] carried out in the larger catering capacities in the Ohrid-Prespa Region the offer tools as a means of communication between guests and the catering object assortment, giving comment on their graphic design, are partly successful. All the quoted instruments in the questionnaire in global impress 41, 37% of the guests. While separately, the food lists 24,82 % and the menu-cards 22, 70 % are on the top.

The results of the analysis show, that the impression of the content-graphic design of the offer instruments on the guests, depend in great extent on their age, education and the place of residence (home - foreign). This conclusion comes from the calculated statistic variable among these factors, that is from the great value of the calculated contingency coefficient. For example, the guests with college level education and higher are most impressed by the good list, while those with primary and secondary school level prefer, like better the menu-card. Also, the menu-card is more preferable for the foreign guests, while home tourists choose as more desirable the food items list. The fact that less than a half of the polled visitors claimed for all the instruments is an proving indicator that the offer instruments have to be improved both graphically and in content.

3. AMBIENCE AND ATMOSPHERE AS RESTAURATEUR PRODUCT ELEMENTS

The catering ambience and atmosphere as environment, mood and situation, are necessarily induced both by the role of the subjective factor and the material factor of the surroundings.

Architecture, decoration, function of the technical appliance, air conditioner, the service quality object, in first place has to be a place for rest. The architecture has to

¹ Tautologie - words or phrases wich represent the same meaning twice.

² The research was managed in the period from may to october, in 1997. A simple by chance pattern was used, including 423 polled guests, 105 foreign tourists and 318 home tourists. The guests were chosen according to the method of accidental choice in the guests register in the principle capacities in Ohrid-Prespa Region. All of those polled were full board guests.

be in accordance with the natural surroundings and forming together a unity. Horticultural structure, tasteful arrangement and decoration of all the departments, ecologically clean and fresh surroundings etc. are in favour of the visitors. The goal of the most experienced designers is the appearance of 'the home far away from home' to be picturesque and inviting, and not to shock or astonish the guest when first entering the room. A contrast to this intimate ambience is the one which is strange, inconvenient and to be avoided. Warm, sweet home atmosphere usually is produced by traditional comfortable warm furniture.

Fine ambience and atmosphere produce various kinds of very subtle communications with the visitors because they don't mean „...only creating comfortable facilities for guest stay, but also they mean complex areal, social, ecological, honourable, humanistic values and segments of tourism“ [9, 140].

Catering ambience and atmosphere produce direct conscious and unconscious influence on guests. The direct conscious influences are manifested by the guest's reaction, for ex., at the very entrance to the restaurant. The atmosphere and ambience are reflected as elements on the base of which a selection is made in the process of bringing a decision about the choice of a certain catering object. For ex.: Is the restaurant very noisy? Are the table put very close? The unconscious influences are manifested by mood, lighting equipment, furniture and music. This is reflected as a certain subtle impression on guests.

The description of the atmosphere as a part of the surroundings is gained through a sensual route [10, 178].

Visual atmosphere dimensions are colours, light, volume and shape. Tone volume and tone height are sound dimensions. Olfactory dimensions include smell and freshness, while the most important touchable dimensions in the atmosphere are softness, elegance and temperature.

For ex. the sensory impression used when describing a typical atmosphere in a bar are: intimate, pleasant, discreet lighting, quiet. While a typical discotheque atmosphere is: high lightning, noise, dynamic, crowd.

The atmosphere and ambience in great extent are the guest's mood creators. According to one psychologist, the atmosphere can be described as „highloading“ and „lowloading“ [10, 278]. The high or low loading levels relate to the information received from the surroundings. For ex. light colours, high lights, noise, crowd, movement, are characteristics of a highloading atmosphere while their opposites are characteristics of a lowloading atmosphere. Highloading atmosphere produces a wish for a dance, dynamic entertainment and adventurous mood, while lowloading atmosphere creates relaxing mood. For ex.: guests visiting hotels whose offer is based on the entertainment in the casino, in fact positively react to the highloading atmosphere offered by this entertainment: exciting adventure, crowd, noise etc. While business people who often travel and who like to relax after a tiring day prefer the lowloading atmosphere in quiet hotels with clubs furnished with comfortable armchairs, reading materials and silence.

The physical surroundings as ambience and atmosphere of the catering object include the communicative connection of the object: transportation service, mail connections and the rest necessary infrastructure for carrying out a modern catering practice.

Beside location, as a material constituent in creating and feeling the ambience the architectural solution of the catering object is included. „The phenomenal exploring of our relation to the architectural object points out that people take the architecture most frequently as a communication act, not excluding, however, its function“ [11,208]. Namely the catering object architecture could serve as a medium for creating attention and message e.g. for the type of the catering object. On other hand, the architecture in catering could be experienced also as a communication with the setting, ethos, folklore. It is very important for the catering object architecture to fit right into the natural surroundings and to form together a unity, because „every discussion on the correlation between the architecture and tourism has to admit that, this relation can only exist in the connection between man and his surroundings“ [12, 141]. A constituent element for the material prerequisites of the ambience is also the functionality of the catering object, permanent proper function of the technical equipment and the whole supply, and their permanent maintenance, and not to speak about hygiene, the image of the staff etc. According to the same research [8, 310] the ambience and atmosphere as a complex of various types of subtle communications with visitors are one of the most successful part of catering offer in Ohrid-Prespa Region. They satisfy completely 70, 45 % of the polled visitors, and partly 27, 66 % which means that only 1, 89 % are not satisfied by this promotive tool.

We have to remark that there is an evident dependence here on the education level, sex, and partly the age. We can state that the most visitors with an M.A. degree and doctorate come out for this attributive category (87,50 % and 60 %) While with primary education to specialisation are for the first attributive catering (completely satisfied: 100 %; 51,72 %; 50,75 %; 97,22 % and 69, 23%)!

As to the visitors opinion from the aspect of their sex, 97,23% of the female visitors are completely satisfied with the ambience and atmosphere, while a half of the male visitors are partly satisfied. However, we can come to an agreement that this part of catering offer is functioning well.

4. THE MODEL „SUGGESTIVE SELLING“ IN THE RESTAURANT OFFER

„Success or failure within the hospitality industry unlimitedly rests on the ability to sell“ [10, 581].

A kind receptionist, a smiling chambermaid, a helping waiter, as well as all the others who face the guests are part of selling power. In the best case the servers can increase the sale by ‘suggestive selling’ effectively suggesting desserts, special drinks or specialities of the house.

In fact the model ‘suggestive selling’ is the waiter to play a role of a well trained salesman: „Servers admit that most guests are not offended or uncomfortable with suggestive selling techniques. In fact, customers may feel special that the server is in tune with their needs and desires“ [4, 190].

The application of this model needs training, experience and professionalism indeed from the givers of services. For the development of competencies to understand and assess the guests, a lot can be learned with permanent and unobtrusive watching and listening, and with questions as a start of a communication [9, 240]. It’s interesting

what is understood under these elements, which learning as a professional skill of serving would be useful in the practice of this model.

When observing we should consider the following:

- how are the guests dressed: dark suit, uniform, smart dress with a hat and gloves, casual or extraordinary
- what do they carry: briefcase, shopping bag, folder, schoolbag or suitcase.

Observing the guests in this way the server classifies them into categories: businessmen who want to eat fast after a hard day, people after shopping or people who want different atmosphere than everyday life, different food, and they have enough time for that.

Active listening helps the servers a lot to know their guests better, their character, professions, needs. But this also needs professional ethic and dignity, not to interfere in the conversations if it's not necessary and keeping the heard for themselves.

The questions at the beginning of the communication are the start of the contact with the guests and are very important for further course of the offer and the success of the service and sale. The questions should be general and not intimate and provocative.

These three elements enable the server to get the picture of the guest and to start the contact according to which he will do the suggestive selling. The suggesting shouldn't be intrusive. The guest should have an impression of wellintentioned help but not an intrusive intention. A wellintentioned offer with honest and accurate information of the quality create pleasure and satisfaction for the guests. According to this mentioned above, all servers can't use this model. People who will be chosen for suggestive selling must have certain qualities as: they already have good communicative skills, they have a good knowledge of at least one foreign language (for the communication with foreign tourists), they know all the cuisine products and what is offered in the wine list, they are pleasant and the guests love them, they are not intrusive and create active pleasant atmosphere.

There are directions in the literature about the organisation of effective suggestive selling [4, 190]:

1. Trained servers as commissioned salespeople
2. Provide incentives and feedback
3. Teach servers to suggest pairings
4. Hire the sales type
5. Create students of food and wine
6. Encourage servers to upsell
7. Promote ear-grabbing phrasing
8. Recognise the unspoken suggestions etc.

What is the promotional aspect of the model 'suggestive selling' about? Restaurant services, which are organised according to suggestive selling, create for guests active offer and sale. These kind of restaurants have special attractive image and they become places where guests have special attention and are offered what they want, but are also suggested products they haven't even thought of. That contributes to a pleasant atmosphere in which the guests can relay and ask for other services. Of course, if this is reached, the model of 'suggestive selling' forms promotive imitation for a visit and enjoyment of this way of giving services.

According to the same research [8, 309] of making the part of material products in the kitchen, through the model 'suggestive selling' in the restaurant, the opinions of the visitors are split, half of the polled visitors would like to make their own choice of food, and the other half feel good and special, because the suggestive questions from the server are whit their wishes and needs. While 4,49% feel unpleasantly. According to this above we can conclude that this kind of serving of products in the restaurant is partly accepted specific form of promotion.

From certain sociodemographic aspects of the polled visitors, the research results show little dependence, and according to this we conclude that this model of selling have equal influence to all visitors, no matter of the structures of the variables. The reasons for this could be in insufficient information and professional ability of the server for this kind of selling, even more having no affinity for serving the products in this way.

5. CONCLUSION

Restaurant services and products represent an important part of the tourist product whole. The restaurant product, itself has also a complex unity consisted of several partial products. The restaurant product content has to be permanently improved in order to be in accordance with the continuous newly come up needs of the customers.

One possible aspect for restaurant product improvement are the offer tools as communication instruments with the product assortment. To attain their goal they have to become more than a mere information. They are to be the marketing tool, which is being expressed especially by their promotive aspect. This is reflected through their professional composition, design, graphic solution including the linguistic aspect.

Other successive elements of the restaurant product which are to be paid attention to by making efforts to improve the restaurant product are the ambience and atmosphere. They are manifested by various types of subtle communications with the visitors which result out from different space, social, ecology, cultural and other correlation. The ambience and atmosphere and their creation are to be in harmony with the type of the catering object and also the consumers needs.

Among other possible aspects for improving the restaurant product we mention the suggestive selling. The right application of this model contributes to active offer and sale and at the same time the objects practising its own special attractive image. The successful model of suggestive selling promotively induce the consumers to visit restaurants where they are welcome and treated with attention and so they are being suggested, in a not intrusive way, to products they have never thought about.

According to the research on the catering product carried out in the Ohrid - Prespa Region we can conclude that from the three contents being questioned, the greatest effect on the visitors have offer instruments, the ambience and atmosphere, while the practice of the suggestive selling model has to be improved.

It is obvious that the treated aspects of restaurant product improvement in this paper are only a part of the complex of different contents in the frame of the compound structure of this offer by which the restaurant product is being built, improved and modernised.

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