

Food and Beverage Management

For the hospitality, tourism and event industries

The third edition

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Design and setting by P.K. McBride

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Product development

Aim

This chapter aims to detail the process of developing the food and beverage product to meet the needs of its target consumer.

Objectives

This chapter is intended to support you in:

- Identify key stages of product development
- Developing detailed knowledge of the meal experience factors
- Identifying and applying various approaches to the development of a consumer–product relationship
- Gaining an insight into service quality and quality management issues
- Setting standards for food and beverage operations
- Developing an integrated approach to service quality management
- Balancing customers service requirements with resource productivity
- Developing the consumer–product relationship as a dynamic process.

3.1 The food and beverage product

In order to progress from the concept development phase, the next requirement in developing a consumer–product relationship is to consider the nature of a food and beverage product. Within this phase questions need to be addressed, and decisions made, in order to turn a consumer focus (the abstract concept that consumers purchase) in to an operational focus.

Customers may view a food and beverage product as a quick snack, a night out, a celebration, an indulgent extravagance or an absolute necessity. These concepts are what customers purchase, but the food and beverage product is what operators construct and provide.

Marketers tend to identify the product as: a central consumer concept known as the core concept; a surrounding layer of tangible features, and an outer layer of augmentation (see Chapter 1, section 1.3). Placing this framework on a food and beverage product might show that the core product is, for example, a wedding celebration, the tangible product is a full wedding banquet, and the augmented product includes the opportunity to pay in instalments. It is helpful to apply this product framework to the development of concepts. This is also where frameworks such as the meal experience can be useful. The meal experience, which was introduced in Chapter 1, comprises five factors: the food and beverage itself, the level of service, the cleanliness and hygiene, the price and the atmosphere.

As there are five factors of the meal experience to consider, the inevitable question arises as to which one should be addressed first. Most food and beverage operators immediately explore the food and beverages, with the construction of a menu and beverage list being given the highest priority. However, it might be more appropriate to explore the price first, or the style and level of service that will be provided, the level of cleanliness and hygiene or the atmosphere and ambience to be created. The intended core, tangible and augmented concepts of the product, considered in the form of benefits to the consumer, will guide an operator when ranking the meal experience factors in order of priority to the consumer. Table 3.1 gives examples of how differing core concepts might change the order of importance, to the customer, of the meal experience factors.

When setting out to design a tangible product it is therefore appropriate to consider the core concept in order to establish the weighting of the meal experience factors and the priority given to them by the customer so that the operation can develop the product from this perspective.

The other dimension, which this approach can also demonstrate, is that limitations in the operation in one part of the meal experience provision will create stronger expectations in the customers' minds from the other parts. For instance a limited menu operation will find that customers are more concerned with value for money and speed of service than they would be in an operation where the menu offered greater choice. In all cases then, although the meal experience factors can be identified in all operations, the intended product will determine

Chapter extract

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