

Problem Solving and Decision Making
BMSW4004

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Introduction

The food service industry includes the restaurants. It is a large industry that focuses on food preparation, but also on customer experience when visiting the restaurant. The restaurants includes staff for the kitchen and staff for serving customers. According to Boost Capital (2020) there are five most common problems that can appear in this industry. Many restaurants struggle with establishing a consistent identity. Many managers want to incorporate too many elements to the restaurants or can not commit to specific service style or specific cuisine. Restaurants reputation should have consistence in food quality and service standards. Another problem is not being up to date with some basic technologies and not meet customers needs. For example not being able to pay by card can be an impediment to some customers. The creation of an attractive menu is another problem to be considered in the restaurant industry. A too large menu can create pressure on the kitchen and reduce quality or waiting time. Another problem is the efficient use of the Internet and Social Media. Restaurants managers should ensure that their online presence is informative for the diners who look for reviews, for information on menus and many other details that could enrich the customers experience.

Defining the problem

Problems are defined as the encountered situations or disruption of activities that needs to be solved, or even persons that require attention (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). The process to deal with a situation or a person it is called problem solving. In the employment it is important to have problem solving skills in order to have efficient activity. There are different types of problems that can occur in business from management and ethics to finances and performance.

The decision making process

The Decision making process is formed by the choices realised towards a decision. It involves gathering data and analysis of alternative options. Managers have a great role in the decision making process and gives indications on the management approach. The decision making process can be realised in a creative way or in a rational way. The creative problem solving modality

involves imagination and innovative thinking and it can be used techniques such as free association, group techniques, structured relationship, serendipity. The model of Creative Problem Solving (CPS) implies divergent and convergent thinking for evaluation and generation of the solutions. The model has straight forward stages: identification of the problem, causes and effects, potential solutions, selecting a solution and an action plan, implementing and monitoring. The rational decision making process has more structure and specific order and implies convergent thinking. It includes the identification of the problem, but it requires data collection and evaluation followed by generation of solutions and implementation.

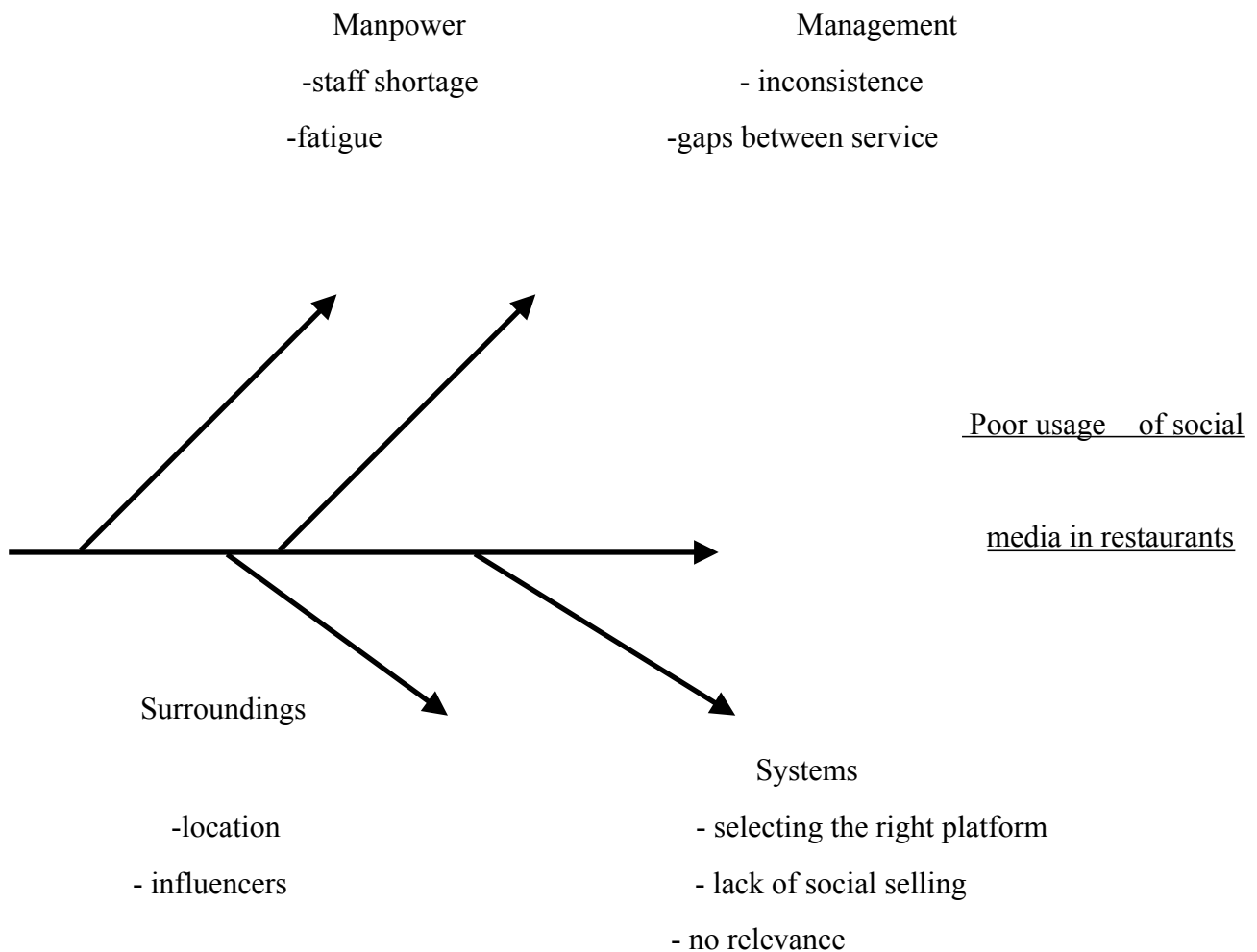
In restaurants some decision making process can be very short, on daily activities such as dealing with customers or it can be very long such as creating a new menu which would need data collection and evaluation. The process of problem solving can involve employees from one or more departments and it can follow hierarchal communication policies.

For this report it is selected the rational decision making process because it will benefit the restaurant to have up to date data on customers needs and latest trends and involves more objectiveness.

Defining the problem: This report is analysing the poor use of internet and social media in the restaurant industry which has gained a major importance for the business run. Social media is considered to be a driven force for restaurants and has become a marketing weapon (Partech, 2019).

Gathering data and evaluation: It was identified that the reasoning behind restaurants poor usage of social media can reflect in inconsistency related to the content provided, another reason is that information could not be posted at the right time and be relevant for customers needs. Another cause is that it has not been selected the most benefiting online platform to attract more customers. For example it is important if the restaurant is situated in a business centre, in a mall or in a more remote location. The platform should be selected according to the targeted segment also, what age interval it is intended to be attracted, what platform do they use most. Using social media platform right involves the social selling element where the business develops relationship with the customers and creates preference for the brand. Usage of influencers to promote business can be tricky if their public image is not in line with business image and the return can be poor (Richings, 2020).

Analysis of the problem: The cause and effect of the problem are part of the analysis and for that purpose it is use the Fishbone Diagram (Figure 1). This method of analysis contributes to the understanding of the problem.



The Fishbone Diagram (Figure 1) has identified that staff shortage can be a cause to the problem as they can focus more on the activity of the business and neglecting social media. Fatigue can also be a caused for poor social media in restaurants. Under management it is presented the inconsistence cause and the gaps between service. This affects the content and leads to the problem. Under surroundings it is stated the location which is not promoted as it should be on social media, or poor selection of influencers that would not represent best the interests of the business. Under systems cause there are elements related to the selection of the social media platform. Also lack of social

selling which adds depth to the content and transforms it into an effective marketing strategy. And last element no relevance, when posts are not created at the right time in order to be relevant for customers needs (Reem et al, 2020).

PESTLE Analysis

Political Factors

The social media platforms are used worldwide by people to express views and formulate opinions. In some countries social media platforms can be banned due to the level of influence that can have. Misleading information and fake impose stricter controlling of malicious content.

Economic Factors:

It is considered that social media has helped business and global economy. It is free for users, but it involves subscription fees for business, but is an efficient modality to make the business known, to get in touch with customers and address their needs.

Social Factors

Social media connects people and business worldwide. It is a growing phenomena and people use to share things from their life and to communicate. Business use it to promote their activity, to get in touch with customers, to take feedback.

Technological Factors:

The technological development made possible the development of social media and plays a major role. Innovation is a constant pursuit for social media companies and software development give complexity to the social media usage.

Legal Factors:

It is considered that Social Media, which are private platforms are differently managed. Therefore if some content is removed it has no legal risks and does not violated the free speech amendment. It is assumed that it should be applied an ethical filter, rather a legal one.

The development of social media has transformed it in a very important source of information and to provide news. The threat of fake news from social media companies should be treated the same way as regular media companies with strong policies put in place for censorship.

Environmental Factors:

Usage of social media involves technology. The manufacturing of this technologies can affect the environment. Further that social media is virtual and does not imply any other negative impacts on environment (Jooyoung et al., 2020).

The SWOT analysis is a method to identify strengths and weaknesses of the business, but also opportunities and threats. This report is applying a SWOT analysis to the restaurant from the workplace.

Restaurant SWOT Analysis

<u>Strengths</u> Brand image Good location Unique menu Good customer service	<u>Weaknesses</u> High cost No marketing team Poor online presence
<u>Opportunities</u> Social media campaigners Brand image growth Increase loyalty from customers Personalised guest experience	<u>Threats</u> Pandemic Competition Bad ratings on social media Loss of customers trust

The strengths of the selected restaurant are related to the uniqueness of the dishes as it is a restaurant with specific cuisine. It has a good location in central London and it has a good reputation and image. The weaknesses are associated with high cost for the operations. The restaurant has no marketing team to promote the restaurants more efficiently and has poor online presence. The opportunities are related to the growth of the brand image, increase of social media use and campaigners, increase of customer loyalty and to offer a more personalised guest experience. The threats are related to Pandemic as it has been observed how it affected the restaurant industry already. Competition as there is a large number of restaurants for customers to choose from. Bad ratings on social media which are not addressed and transformed into a positive experience for the customers and loss of customer trust (Kwon et al, 2021).

Alternative solutions to the problem

The poor usage of social media in restaurants determined that there are different factors to be taken in consideration, internal and external. The problem can impact negatively the restaurant activity and it has been highlighted the beneficial role that could have for the business if the problem is improved. A solution can be to employ a marketing specialist that would take all the responsibilities to promote the business, including the social media usage by the restaurant. Another solution would be to give training to existing staff such as managers to use social media most effectively for business purposes.

Evaluation of the solutions

The PMI model is used for decision making that gives plus, minus or interesting values to the situation based on facts.

What is good +	What is bad -	What is interesting
Technology +2	Policy -1 Expertise -1	Resources +1

Total +1

The analysis has identified that technology is important for the business and can be used as a marketing tool. Policies on social media can restrict content, but that would not be the case of restaurants who use it for information related to the business. Restaurants do not have a marketing team and that can reduce the success of the business (Dossena et al, 2020). What is interesting is the resources of the restaurant that can make them known and trusted through high quality dishes and customer service. The second option is more viable from the cost involved consideration as evaluated in the SWOT analysis. It will cost less to train a manager to improve social media activity and promotion of the business, instead of the cost of a new employee.

Implementation of the solution

The ADKAR model is used to implement changes. This mode is used to implement the change needed to solution ate the problem. Awareness for change is the first step and includes the introduction of the change to the staff. Desire to change is the next step where the managers should show support to the change. The action steps presents the actions taken to make the change. Last

change reinforcement refers to management to assess the success of social media usage and make sure is consistent.

Monitoring and reviewing

The monitoring and reviewing will be the responsibility of the managers. Customers have the choice of giving feedback on the change and appreciate if it satisfies their needs, if it gives them the desired content and information, if they can successful communicate with the business and if their feedback is taken into account. Managers will appreciate if the improved activity on social media helps the business or if they need to have a different approach.

Conclusion

The social media growth has enlarged the purposes of the platforms and business have oriented to it to promote their activity. Restaurants can benefit of social media as they can publish photos of their menu, they can update the customers , they can create thee feeling of the guest experience by attractive posts and they can communicate with customers.

The solution identified for the problem is simple and forward and gives the knowledge to the managers to use social media in an efficient way to promote the business. Taking in consideration that many restaurants do not have a marketing department, social media can be very helpful and influence positively the results if handled properly. It is an opportunity for the business that should be maximised.

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