



**SZENT ISTVÁN UNIVERSITY**

**Doctoral School of Management and Business Administration**

**THE MAIN ASPECTS OF CONSUMER  
BEHAVIOUR AND SATISFACTION  
IN CATERING**

THESIS OF THE DOCTORAL (PHD) DISSERTATION

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Background of the study, objectives set

Catering, as a service, has several such specific features, which require comprehensive, versatile examination from various standpoints. It is an important, complex activity for the society, in which the eminent role of the human factor is undisputable. In my research, I analyzed the specific manifestations of customer behaviour and satisfaction and tried to reveal their connections. I examined the correctness of my hypotheses then made proposals in order to raise the level of Hungarian catering, thus improving the well-being of the population and increasing the popularity of our country.

The Hungarian population avails itself of restaurants like public houses, fast food restaurants, (hereinafter referred to as: restaurants, restaurant catering) much less frequently than the European population, which was proven based on both secondary and primary researches as well. My research, being aware of the factors influencing customer behaviour and satisfaction, was oriented on the ways the number of customers and profit can be increased, profitability improved and more regular customers obtained.

Customers seek experiences; the factors, which influence their satisfaction, are subjective, considerably depending on their personalities. The use of this service is considered 'small value business'; it is characterized by impulse buying and situational involvement. In our country, although consumer prices in catering are much lower than the European average, the price sensitivity of the population is high. This is mainly due to the fact that discretionary income is lower in Hungary than in most European countries. This is probably also why most Hungarian people 'need' family or workplace occasions or events to eat in public places, not at home.

Word-of-mouth propaganda, because of the risk and the personalized character of the sector, is more important in Hungary than in case of product related services. The network of catering premises is characterized by a wide range of selection (many types of premises) and strong competition in the market. The position of the sector is made even more difficult by the determining role of seasonality, fashion and prestige in consumer behaviour. Measuring the degree of satisfaction is also more difficult than in hotels as the availability of customers is not known by caterers. Satisfaction has to be examined in different dimensions because change processes frequently occur in catering, while customer loyalty also has special significance. The common elements of service-related satisfaction are the quality of service and that of the physical product (food, beverage) included therein, price and venue. The judgement of the quality of service is subjective, thus it may also be called as 'human factor'. The importance thereof is also supported by the literature of service marketing considering the abstract nature of the service.

Satisfaction with the ambiance and the atmosphere of catering premises has a positive effect on loyalty created by word-of-mouth propaganda. Staff-related satisfaction also has a crucial role, which emphasizes the role of human resource in catering. The high level work of well-qualified employees with proper attitude is invaluable when customers make such decisions, which stimulate them to choose that particular catering unit instead of those of other competitors in the market.

There are several sources available in connection with consumer behaviour and satisfaction, however, hardly any reference book or professional article can be found thereof besides college textbooks. The situation is similar with respect to statistical data; service providers have not collected detailed data related to catering for several years.

I started my research about this topic more than 15 years ago; I have been collecting and reading professional literature and translated reference books and professional articles from English and German since then. As a result, the bibliography of my dissertation contains 244 reference books and professional articles, 55 publications from the internet as well as several legal regulations and studies.

## 1.2. The objectives of the research and the hypotheses related thereto

The objectives of my research with the hypotheses related thereto are summarized as follows:

**C1.** Based on the professional literature and available databases:

- introduction of the social and economic significance of catering (number of catering premises, revenue, employment, contribution to GDP)
- description of the characteristics of catering services for the survey of the consumer behaviour and satisfaction of customers with special regards to the manifestations of SDL concept in the catering industry (role of front line-back office, significance and quality message of the establishment of catering premises, customer activity, being relationship-oriented and environment)
- studying the characteristics of social classes - based on the lifestyles thereof - for the survey of Hungarian consumer behaviour.
- the role of prices in consumer behaviour with special regard to prestige consumption.
- studying the theoretical aspects and measuring techniques of satisfaction for the planning and implementation of the research.

**C2.** Survey about the present condition of Hungarian catering

- survey and analysis of the profitability of Hungarian catering compared to that of other European countries.
- Preparing SWOT analysis about the present situation of catering, for the evaluation of the research results as well as for formulating suggestions.

**C3.** Studying and mapping customer opinions related to consumer behaviour and satisfaction by qualitative and quantitative methods. Revealing such factors, which influence the selection of catering premises and customer satisfaction.

**H1.** While visiting restaurants; there is a significant difference between the consumer behaviour of the young and the ones with family/middle-aged ones with different factors influencing their satisfaction.

**H2.** Customers' selection of catering premises, repurchase and satisfaction are significantly influenced by the type and character of catering premises, the consumer prices applied, advertising and prestige aspects.

**C4.** Establishing clusters of potential customers by the application of appropriate research methods to make managers in the catering sector able to learn more about the consumer behaviour of customers, to segment and establish target groups more precisely as well as to apply proper marketing strategies.

**H3.** The potential customers of restaurants have such characteristics and expectations, on the basis of which they can be clustered.

**C5.** Studying the opinion of the professional level, that is, the managers of catering about the characteristics of catering premises, services provided thereby, changes in the number and character of customers, employees and professional trends.

**H4.** The managers of catering, the professional leaders know the expectations of customers and try to suit them. They employ competent employees and put a great emphasis on the training and motivation of their colleagues.

## **2. MATERIAL AND METHOD**

Secondary and primary research was done by the consideration and application of the research methods suggested by the professional literature.

The planning process of my research was built on phases based on each other in time and content. (Kotler, 1998, 152-163 p., Tomcsányi, 2000, Malhotra, 2002, 64 p., Bruhn, 2004, 92 p., Berekoven et al. 2004, 36 p.).

The analysis of the professional literature and the available databases provided sufficient information for the survey of the present condition of Hungarian catering, for studying the characteristics related to consumer behaviour, for the selection of methods related to primary research and for performing the analysis.

Besides secondary information, qualitative research (deep interviews) was also necessary for me to understand the problem and its connections with its environment. I did more independent researches in order to meet my objectives by the application of a research plan based on the mixed research method.

### **2.1. Qualitative research**

Before starting my quantitative research, it was necessary to understand and reveal the way of thinking, opinion-forming processes, habits and attitudes of my respondents. (Hoffmann et al. 2000):

In order to formulate hypotheses precisely, I made deep interviews with knowledgeable professionals individually, in the flats or restaurants of respondents as well as at Budapest Business School. The aim of the deep interviews I made was to define the expressions used in practice, to clarify notions as well as to make a survey about the general use thereof. They provided the basis for establishing the framework of interviewing focus groups.

The next phase included the preparation of the research, the development of questionnaires, which was done on the basis of the results of interviewing my focus groups. My first interview was made with the participation of the students of Budapest Business School – College of Commerce, Catering and Tourism (BBS CCCT), who often visit restaurants; the members of the second group were middle-aged, graduated people from Budapest and the countryside.

### **2.2. Quantitative research**

Qualitative methods were followed by quantitative techniques, which were targeting at the quantifiable parts of variables. Attitude research was necessary for my topic, which I implemented by scale techniques.

While editing the questionnaires, I paid special attention to the determination of the types of questions, the formulation of questions, the correct logical order as well as the careful editing thereof. I applied the snowball sampling method from the methods of non-random sampling for my research of potential customers.

Prior to the particular survey, I made pilot-interviews in order to determine the suitability of the questionnaire, which was developed on the basis of previous analyses. The target group - for the more simple implementation of the survey - contained the students of BBS CCCT. My survey was made in more phases, thus being able to learn about the opinion of more than 100 students of catering and hotel management in the final year of their studies. Based on the results of my research, I had to change the formulation of several questions, however, finally I was able to correct most mistakes of the questionnaire. Prior to the test interviews there were much more open questions, but even more well-informed and educated respondents were unwilling to answer them. On the basis of my research results, I changed open questions to closed ones. With regards to closed questions, my questionnaire mainly contains selective type of questions, including scale questions (Likert scale, simple selection).

My dissertation contains three quantitative researches. I interviewed potential customers– with some time shifts and a more clearly defined target group - in my first and second surveys.

During the first survey (2008), the questionnaire was filled in by 541 persons (country-wide sample) in evaluable form; the survey was targeted at Hungarian customers exclusively. I applied the SAS (Statistical Analysis System) program for processing it at that time. My questions were arranged in compliance with three organizing principles: the first one was focusing on satisfaction, the second one on loyalty and the third one on relationships. I asked 14 questions in connection with the first one, 6 questions related to the second one, while 15 questions were connected to the third one, thus altogether 35 questions were included in my questionnaire. Respondents were able to classify the questions from 1-5, according to whether they were 'very satisfied/agreed very much' (5) or they were 'very dissatisfied/disagreed very much' (1). Thus, by the use of dual value creation, I was able to obtain information about the consumer behaviour of customers and about the factors determining their satisfaction and selection of catering premises. Distances in these spaces can be interpreted similarly to those in objective spaces. I considered this important as based on my description above, instead of analyzing 35 questions, by the use of principal component analysis; I was able to decrease the number of variables to three groups, separately.

Due to the economic changes and the passage of time, I regarded it important to make another questionnaire-based survey (2011) with the target group which – on the basis of the results of the first survey – most often uses restaurant catering. More than half of the respondents who formulated their opinion about their consumer behaviour and the factors influencing their satisfaction were from Budapest. 70% of the participants of the survey were graduated from higher education, which also represents those who regularly use catering. The range of those involved in the survey was narrowed by their family life cycles. 39 % of the respondents belonged to the young ones (aged 18-24), 35 % to the age group of family starters, with families (aged 25-45) and 26 % of them to the middle-aged (aged 46-55) ones. There were more female than male respondents – with regards to the distribution of the gender thereof. The same ranges of questions were given to the respondents; however, I reformulated some of the statements based on the results of the first survey. 339 evaluable questionnaires were returned to me by the kérdőívem.hu programme and 304 thereof remained for further processing due to filtering. In this case I used the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) statistical programme for the analysis.

The subject of my third presented research was the opinion of the managers of the catering sector. The survey included all catering types from all nine regions of Hungary. The research was done by interviewers. This work was also very useful for my topic as I was able to learn about the opinion of service providers as well. The results I received enabled me to justify or reject my hypotheses and to provide suggestions for the development of catering as well as for increasing the profitability thereof.

Related to this topic, I examined the factors, which determine the regional distribution of restaurants in Hungary. My analysis was performed in two steps: first I did the principal component analysis of such variables, which described the determining external space, then, as a result thereof, by the principal components as explanatory variables, I tried to explain the number of restaurants per 1000 citizens by linear regression with more variables.

### 2.3. Summary of applied research methods

I used several statistical methods during the evaluation of the professional literature and the process of secondary research and questionnaires.

**Table 1: Applied research methods**

<b>Revealing Research Methods: Secondary Data</b>	
<b>Methods</b>	<b>Place and Target thereof in the Dissertation</b>
evaluation of secondary data (methodology, precision, being up-to-date, objectives of research, content of data, reliability)	professional literature review, Hungarian Central Statistic Office (HCSO) data, surveys of market research companies
analysis of syndicated secondary data	processing the data provided by market research companies (GFK, Nielsen, M.Á.S.T.)
<b>Revealing Research Methods: Qualitative Research</b>	
preparing deep interviews	formulating and testing hypotheses
interviewing focus groups	test interviews, finalizing the development of questionnaires
<b>Descriptive Research Methods: Observation and Interviewing</b>	
unstructured, personal observation	clarification of the research problem, formulating hypotheses, analysing the consumer behaviour of customers
interviewing orally and in written form (e-mail, on-line questionnaires)	structured collection of data about the consumer behaviour of customers and about factors influencing customer satisfaction.
checking interviewers (field researchers)	part of the research entitled: 'Survey of the Situation of the Catering Sector'
cause and effect research	the survey of parallel fluctuation by the analysis of questionnaire surveys (e.g.: whether higher qualification results in the more frequent visit of restaurants) analysis of dependent, independent and external variables
<b>Measuring and Creating Scales: Creating Comparative Scales</b>	
creating nominal scales	developing questionnaires: demographic data, identifying respondents, creating possibilities of grouping calculating distributions
<b>Measuring and Creating Scales: Creating Non-Comparative Scales</b>	
discrete evaluation scale: Likert scale	developing questionnaires: determining the structure of questions, selecting the techniques of creating scales for measuring attitudes
<b>Mathematics Statistics Methods</b>	
statistical lines and statistical tables	processing secondary data
factor analysis (KMO indicator, Bartlett test, rotated factor matrix)	processing questionnaires, analysing data



analysing clusters cross-tables, Ward Method-5 Chi square test notable statistics (Cramer)	making conclusions on the basis of questionnaire-based surveys
linear regression with more variables	survey of factors influencing the regional distribution of restaurants
<b>Used Softwares</b>	
SAS	analysis of data received from questionnaire-based survey: Interviewing customers I.
SPSS	analysis of data received from questionnaire-based survey: Interviewing customers II.
MICROSOFT EXCEL	analysis of data received from questionnaire-based survey: creating charts

Source: own edition

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1. Results of secondary research**

According to the study of Ernst & Young (2013) prepared for the assignment of the European Union, which deals with the analysis of the HOTREC sector of 31 European countries, restaurants could be found in the highest number in the sector in Hungary in 2010 and 54% of the employees were also employed here. With regards to all enterprises of Hungary, most of them operate exactly in this sector. Its revenue was HUF 754 billion in 2013, which is nearly 3% of the GDP.

Based on my secondary research it was justified that the Hungarian population rarely visit restaurants, much more rarely than those in other countries of Europe. However, its positive effect on wellbeing is undisputable. It has to suit the international trends and the expectations of customers and has to provide experiences continuously, which can only be achieved by continuous development. However, only profitable enterprises are able to make development. Based on the partly available secondary data, I prepared an analysis about the profitability of Hungarian tourism-catering, with a view to the European situation as well.

After the examination of the European level, it can be concluded that while the total productivity of providing accommodation and catering together was Euro 20 thousand/person in the EU-28 in 2011, this figure was only Euro 5.9 thousand/per person in Hungary, that is, nearly 30% of the European average.

#### **3.2. Results of qualitative research**

My interviews targeted the focus groups of young segment participating in higher education (aged 20-35) and the middle-aged people (aged 35-55) with graduation from higher education. I have selected these two target groups because, in my experience, they are the ones who most often visit restaurants. My hypothesis was justified by my first questionnaire-based survey. I am going to summarize the received responses, which the final version of the questionnaire was based on as follows:

*The opinions of the young segment:*

The question of price is the most important to them, but the friendliness and professional knowledge of the staff also have crucial role in their satisfaction as well as the atmosphere and the provided services (mainly music). Due to their price sensitivity, they would change venue if their favourite catering establishment rose their prices or if the competitors thereof made more

favourable offers to them. Although they love special sales, which they try to take advantage of, they focus on good quality. Distance is not an obstacle for them. Relationship is a determining aspect for the young segment while selecting catering establishments. They regard it very important if their friends also like the venue or their family members have a good time there. Prestige aspects were not mentioned by them, they did not find them important.

*The opinions of the middle-aged segment:*

Good quality, wide range and quality of selection as well as comfort (vicinity, possibility of reserving a table, accessibility, parking, opening hours) are the most important aspects to middle-aged ones. Price is not a question with primary importance to them while selecting a catering venue. They would like to become regular customers if their discretionary income were higher. In case they are satisfied, they return, in addition, they offer the restaurant to others as well. According to middle-aged ones, it is not the staff they need to have good relationship with (they would find high level work natural), they would rather intend to build business and friendly relationships at the given restaurant. In their opinion, the selection of venue is significantly influenced by prestige, that is, 'the kind of catering establishment that someone prefers says a lot about him/her'.

### **3.3. Questionnaire-based survey of guests I.**

Slightly more than half of the customers signed catering establishments as their most preferred restaurant, the ratio of public houses was 12%, that of brasseries was almost 10%, while cafés had 7% followed by fast food restaurants, wayside inns and canteens. Thus, my conclusion was that most customers would prefer to visit such premises, which offer better quality.

My survey, based on the character of restaurants, showed that nearly 60% of respondents prefer venues with neutral profiles, 20% of them signed Hungarian style restaurants, while 13% comprise those who prefer the cuisines of other nations. The number of those who selected restaurants with special character is insignificant. This shows that Hungarian consumers are rather conservative; their demand from gastronomy is mainly characterized by their habits as well as by their well-tried and known flavours. They rarely select special restaurants, thus building up the standard clientele (regular customers) thereof is a more difficult task than in average cases.

From the aspect of further analyses, the sources where customers learn about the restaurants is also an important question. Nearly half of them were offered their venues by someone, more than 45% of them signed their residences or workplaces nearby. The number of advertisements and other motives is insignificant; they do not have serious effect on the selections.

With regards to regularity, it can be stated that 73% of respondents visit restaurants monthly or even more rarely. 21% of them can be characterized by weekly, while only 6% by daily regularity. Mainly this should be changed to achieve higher turnover. The turnover of restaurants could also be increased, besides increasing the number of their customers, by making the visits thereof more frequent.

While comparing by genders, my findings show that men visit restaurants much more frequently than women (the ratio is: 2/3-1/3), although there are 5% more women in the whole population than men. In consequence thereof, it is worth targeting female customers or extending male clientele.

By the use of principal component analysis, I was able to concentrate on 11 complex statements instead of 35 original variables; 11 eigenvalues as well as such principal components vectors, which can be determined therefrom.

In the first range of questions, I examined factors influencing customer satisfaction based on the four determining eigenvectors. 50% of the respondents were satisfied with the staff (friendliness, satisfying unique demands, speed of service), which in my opinion - due to the determining role of employees working in the service - proves to be insufficient. Nearly 36% of them evaluated the work of the staff as good, while nearly 14% thereof as medium. This value can also be regarded as negative as most of them gave information about their favourite restaurants.

Related to prices, I assumed that respondents would express their dissatisfaction. In spite of this, 85% of them considered consumer prices appropriate; in their opinion, they were in compliance with the provided quality. The sales prices of their favourite restaurants were evaluated as medium by merely 14% of the respondents and only one of them rejected the question. This is in contrast with my assumption that prices have an important role in the selection of their catering premises and in the development of their satisfaction.

I also received a surprising result in connection with the selection, quality and atmosphere of restaurants. Only 36% of them were completely satisfied with the selection and quality of food, the provided services, the atmosphere and cleanliness of venues as well as the clientele thereof in their 'favourite restaurants'. Nearly half of the respondents evaluated these aspects as 'good' and 15% of them as medium. Another point to think about is the opinion respondents would express if it were not about their 'favourite places'.

The worst opinions were expressed about their accessibility and environment. Nearly 28% of the respondents evaluated their favourite restaurant as medium with regards to the accessibility of them, their parking facilities, external appearance and environment, however, only 23% of them were completely satisfied therewith.

According to the results of the charts, there were hardly any completely negative opinions or dissatisfaction; accessibility and environment (1,5%) were criticized by most of them. In spite of this, it is to be considered by the owners and leaders of the catering sector that not even 'their favourite catering establishment' were evaluated as 'excellent'. Apparently, responses like 'indifferent' and 'satisfied' occurred much more frequently (70%) than the opinion of 'really satisfied' in case of the favourite venues of respondents. With regards to the satisfaction degree with their favourite venues, it can be seen that they are preferred mainly because of satisfaction with the staff, while selection, quality and atmosphere are of secondary importance only. Sales prices – according to my results - do not influence the satisfaction of customers significantly.

The second part was focusing on statements related to loyalty. Due to the principle component analysis, I was able to limit my survey to the examination of two tables. The loyalty of customers was examined in the first one, while the existence of market-based attachment, which is in a sense the opposite thereof - was examined in the second one. I examined the importance of loyalty in catering premise-customer relationships and the extent to which market-based attachment, that is, more favourable prices and offers as well as the accessibility of the venue count. Merely 19% of the respondents regard themselves regular customers in their favourite restaurants. They would not change catering establishment even if prices were increased, moreover, if they could, they would use the services of the units more frequently. They regard quality as the most determining factor of selecting restaurants. Further 52% also find these aspects important, while 27% of them are indifferent thereto. The number of such customers who consider themselves not necessarily loyal is insignificant (1,5%).

Customers rather have emotional attachment to their favourite catering premises than rational one. 18% of respondents categorically reject the market-based approach, while the majority of them (45%) are indifferent thereto. However, 37% of the respondents would change their places in case they received better offers from the competitors or they would select such restaurants, which are more easily accessible.

The third range of questions was oriented to relationships. To be known by the staff is not important (marks 1-2) to 20% of the respondents and they do not find their relationship with restaurants important either. They would not make any effort (time, travel, etc.) to maintain their relationships. With relation to these themes, 40% regarded themselves indifferent and only nearly 40% felt that establishing and maintaining good relationships is important to them.

Selecting a restaurant is not considered an important decision (marks 1-2) by 28% of the respondents. They totally disagreed with the statement: “the kind of catering establishment that I prefer says a lot about me”.

They are also the ones who do not think about whether their decisions on selecting their catering establishments are advantageous or disadvantageous. 40% were indifferent and only 30% regarded themselves concerned about this range of questions. In my opinion, respondents wanted to meet the expectations of the society when they were completing the questionnaires and they attempted to suit their responses to sensitive 'questions' to the public taste.

46% of the respondents like trying new, unknown things; and the attractiveness of the venue has a crucial role in the selection of their catering establishments. Prior to the selection of their favourite restaurants they visited more catering establishments and were considering their decisions. They become or might become regular customers, thus, more attention should be paid on retaining them. More than half of the respondents probably belong to the group of those who rarely visit restaurants.

Responses to such statements, which were related to the character of regular venues, had reassuring results even for those working in the catering sector. According to most of the respondents (80%), their family members and friends also enjoy being in the restaurants selected by the respondents and would willingly offer them to their acquaintances as well.

Results related to the themes of prestige contradict my assumption. More than 20% of the respondents are not careful when they try new catering establishments, being able to meet their friends, acquaintances is not important to them; in addition, they would not like to arrange their business relationships there either. It can be stated that there are great differences between the opinions about the questions of relationships. Respondents of the questionnaires find prestige the least crucial for their decisions; it is followed by business relations, that is, respondents would not necessarily take their clients to their favourite places.

The character and quality level of restaurants, the location of their settlement, the gender of their customers, their qualifications and occupations did not have a significant role in the factors influencing satisfaction.

Based on the cross-tables obtained from the questionnaires, my conclusion from the examination of distributions by the character of catering establishments was that the atmosphere and the selection of food and drinks were much more important in the case of restaurants, public houses, brasseries and cafés.

In case of regular customers, their relationship with other guests, with the staff and the management in the given venue is more important than their satisfaction with the performance of the restaurants in their particular profiles. Based on my research I also concluded that this is not beyond all limits, only over a certain ‘threshold level of performance’. As the frequency is reduced, this statement turns into its opposite. Less frequent visitors of catering establishments regard satisfaction with prices, service, selection and comfort more important than personal relations.

On the basis of my own opinion and experience (in spite of the received results) prestige, that is, selecting such restaurants, which they think may reveal a lot about their own status and lifestyle to others, has an important role in the selection of catering premises. However, this statement had different strengths for different age groups in the research. Prestige is more significant in case of old ones than for the young people (under the age of 25). Mostly 36-50 year old ones find the maintenance of their relationship with the catering establishments, the opinion of others and having prestige character important. The reason for this might also be that this age group already has an established lifestyle possessing the material assets necessary thereto.

### 3.4. Questionnaire-based survey of guests II.

This search already focused on targeting the citizens of Budapest as one third of restaurants can be found there (HCSO) and – according to the results of the previous survey – regular visitors also make their living there.

Most respondents signed restaurants (59%) as their ‘favourite catering establishments’ there as well; public houses, which have similar characteristics to those of restaurants, were signed by 14%, fast food restaurants by 10% of them. The ratio of other restaurants is not significant. My research resulted in 11 factors by using factor analysis and 5 clusters by the application of cluster analysis. Clusters I performed both procedures in order to get a more precise result. My five clusters were characterized by demographic data as well. Therefore, I did a cross-table analysis where I also examined the associative links between cluster and demographic data.

**Table 2.: Characteristic features of clusters**

Factors	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Cluster 5
Satisfaction with favourite restaurant	Low	Low	High	High	High
Satisfaction with prices and service	Medium	Medium	High	High	Low
Satisfaction with environment	Medium	High	Low	High	High
Satisfaction with selection	Low	Medium	Low	High	High
Loyalty to favourite restaurant	Low	Med-high	High	High	Medium
Market-based approach	High	Medium	Medium	Low	High
Comfort	High	High	Medium	Low	Low
Friendly Relationships	Low	Low	High	High	High
Character of regular place	Low	High	High	High	Low
Prestige	High	Low	Medium	High	High
Business partners	Medium	Low	High	Low	Low
Income	High	Low	Even	Low	Even

Source: own edition

In order to analyze clusters as precisely as possible, I also examined the types of restaurants that are most preferably selected by the ones who belong to a certain group.

### *Characteristic Features of clusters*

On the basis of the information I obtained from my research; I characterized, then denominated the clusters. I compiled the traits thereof from their most characteristic features (high values). In my opinion, the knowledge of the characteristics of clusters may contribute to the more effective segmentation of restaurants and to the development of the strategy thereof.

#### *Cluster 1. 'Disloyal snobs'*

'Disloyal snobs' do not insist on their favourite restaurant, if better conditions were offered to them, they would change immediately. They follow the special sales of competitors and the offers of other restaurants. Being comfortable, they select such restaurants, which are close to their flats, workplaces or are on their way. Prestige has an important role in their lives so they carefully consider which restaurant to select. They think their selection of restaurants reveals a lot about them, they regard it as a status symbol. If they get the opportunity, they also build their network of relationships there, even with the clientele of catering premises. They like traditional restaurants. They do not visit fast food restaurants and cafés. They are men with high income from the countryside; their restaurants can also be found in countryside towns or villages.

#### *Cluster 2. 'Comfortable guests'*

They are comfortable, the environment of the business venues, their accessibility and the possibility of parking are important to them. They choose those catering establishments, which are closest to their flats or workplaces. They visit their favourite restaurants relatively often; they almost regard themselves as regular customers there. Being well-known by the staff is important to them. They would remain loyal in spite of a small price increase or minor errors of the staff. They most prefer visiting restaurants, not low category fast food restaurants. This group mainly contains such women, who have lower income. They most often choose restaurants from Budapest, hardly ever from the countryside (especially not those situated in villages).

#### *Cluster 3. 'Reliable regular guests'*

The equipment, the atmosphere, cleanliness and clientele have significant role in their selection of catering establishments as well as in their satisfaction. Friendly staff is very important to them. They pay attention to the price-quality ratio, but their selection and satisfaction are rather influenced by the quality of the food. They consider themselves as regular customers at their favourite restaurant; price increase or the minor deficiencies of service do not discourage them. They like inviting their friends, acquaintances, business partners to their regular places; moreover, they regularly offer them to others. In case of their favourite restaurant they do not even regard distance as an obstacle. They would not like to try a new venue. They have good relationship with the staff. They have medium-sized income. They prefer restaurants and cafés in Budapest.

#### *Cluster 4. 'Everything is important' regular guests*

The equipment, the atmosphere and the range of their customers have significant role in their selection of business premises. They expect from the staff to be friendly and attentive. They pay attention to the price-quality ratio, but their selection and satisfaction are more influenced by the quality of the food. Their decision is significantly influenced by the environment of catering venues, their accessibility and the possibility of parking. They select such restaurants where there is a wide selection of food and drinks, many services are provided thereby and they meet individual demands as well. They consider themselves as regular customers at their favourite restaurant; price increase or the minor deficiencies of services do not discourage them. They like inviting their friends, acquaintances, business partners to their regular places and they regularly offer them to others. In case of their favourite restaurant they do not even regard distance as an

obstacle. Good relationship with the staff constitutes a determining part of their satisfaction. The selection of catering establishments is an important decision for them as the aspects of prestige have a crucial role in their lives. They think their selection of catering premises is a status symbol. If they get the opportunity, they build their network of relationships there too. They admit having low income. The ratio of genders is the same in the cluster. Their most preferred catering premises are fast food restaurants, followed by cafés and public houses. They do not like visiting fine dining restaurants. They are from Budapest; their favourite places are also in the capital city.

#### Cluster 5. *Comfortable snobs*’

The equipment, the atmosphere and the range of their customers have significant role in their selection of business premises. The environment of business premises, their accessibility and the possibility of parking are important to them. They select such restaurants where there is a wide selection of food and drinks, many services are provided thereby and they meet individual demands as well. They do not insist on their favourite catering premises; if better conditions were offered to them, they would change immediately; they are watching the special sales of competitors continuously. They are interested in similar catering premises and they are also visited by them. In spite of this, they like inviting their friends, acquaintances, business partners to their regular places and they regularly offer them to others. In case of their favourite restaurants they do not even regard distance as an obstacle. Prestige has an important role in their lives, they think, the selection of catering premises is a status symbol. Despite this, they do not visit restaurants and cafés with better quality services, they like using fast food restaurants or canteens. If they get the opportunity, they build their network of relationships at the given catering premises too. They have medium sized income. The cluster mainly includes men from Budapest.

### **3.5. Professional level, interviewing caterers**

In the questionnaires, I asked about the quality levels of restaurants, which owners and managers were allowed to choose from given alternatives freely. Unfortunately, there has been no central system of regulations or aspects for classification based on quality levels in catering, thus, I have developed possible categories. 63% of the examined premises were regarded high level by the managers, which, in my opinion, is an overvaluation and reflects the subjective opinion of the management. Similarly to restaurants, quality demands should be determined centrally here as well, based on unified principles, which catering premises would be able to use as their base for complying with the quality indicators of the classification characteristic thereof. I also propose that the compliance with the centrally prescribed principles should be followed by professional control, which is an already well-established system in the case of hotels. This could significantly improve the level of Hungarian catering as well as its intention to achieve better quality, and consequently, the satisfaction of its customers.

The examined restaurants used more different sales methods at the same time depending on their turnover. Serving, which provides the highest quality level and comfort in the sector, can be found at almost all enterprises (89%).

Most of the examined catering premises were positioned by their managers as traditional ones, with Hungarian style, which provide homely atmosphere. This is also reflected by the expectations of customers (questionnaire-based surveys), which, based on the data of the survey, catering enterprises are trying to meet.

Regarding specialities, preparation methods can be considered as the most significant ones, which are used by 44 restaurants (63%) from the interviewed ones. The establishment of catering premises was on the second place (nearly 25%), followed by special accessories and individual

atmosphere. However, they do not pay enough attention either to special ingredients or to wearing uniforms, which is so easy to realize, but makes the premise interesting.

With respect to the food selection of restaurants: 64% of examined premises would mainly like to suit seasonal requirements. 59% of them offer the characteristic food of that particular region, which, in my opinion, meets the requirements of customers as the surveys focusing on interviewing customers showed that they prefer traditional, Hungarian selection. It is surprising that caterers refuse the introduction of novelties.

46 restaurants of the 70 examined ones (66%) regarded their kitchens Hungarian, while 38% considered them international. Based on this it can be assumed that Hungarian, international and regional kitchens can also be found at restaurants at the same time. In order to meet all expectations, the selection of restaurants also contains vegetarian and dietary dishes, which I regard as a right and progressive solution.

The selection of provided services is quite large in the examined venues, thus increasing their level and quality. Most restaurants accept payment by bank cards (74%), by holiday vouchers (64%), which can be given by the employer with favourable conditions of taxation as well as by meal vouchers (66%). For the quality level and comfort, the examined catering premises also have air conditioning (66%), parking spaces (74%) and cloakrooms (53%). Only 11% of them deal with home delivery (in the case of business clients), which I think, more attention should be paid on because of the increasing demand therefor.

Most of the examined restaurants are 'family friendly', approximately 70% of them have children's menu and high chairs for them, 21% of them also established children's corners. It will be a favourable step in the future that a lot of premises would like to extend the frequency of their events for children and place more and more emphasis on families.

The positive features I recognized about the comfort services of the restaurants under survey cannot be mentioned in connection with the field of entertainment provided by them. Only half of the caterers provide live music, which is probably due to the considerable wage and contribution demands as well as the high tariffs of the Society Artisjus Hungarian Bureau for the Protection of Authors' Rights. Providing entertainment facilities is not considered important by the management of catering establishments. However, the organization of events – which, in my opinion is extremely profitable - can be considered as significant - it is applied by 70% of the restaurants participating in the survey.

The results of my interviews with customers showed that the selection of restaurants is hardly influenced by advertisements, rather by the opinion of others, their recommendations. In spite of this, 69% of the interviewed premises have their own publications (e.g.: brochures), 89% of them operate their own websites, 17% of them send newsletters (I have no information about their frequency), 57% of them are present on such websites, which offer restaurants and 43% of them are on social networking sites as well. I did not ask any other question related to the last aspect so I have no information about the frequency of their presence, the messages sent and the efficiency thereof either.

I also wanted to learn about the particular advertisements, which are used by the interviewed enterprises. We experienced the use of TV commercials by 16% of them (as I conclude it from their price level, they were probably in the local TV), the same applies to advertisements broadcasted in the radio. Nearly half of the examined restaurants have their advertisements in country-wide and local publications, however, I have no information about their frequency. Flyers (64%) and sandwich board signs (76%) are mainly for attracting local, potential clientele.



I assume that the enterprises involved in the analysis have already tried those advertising tools, which provide the greatest efficiency for them.

Although the application of any advertisement has considerable cost effect on restaurants, nearly all of the examined catering venues paid special attention to it. My two researches so far proved that advertisements do not play a significant role in customers' selection of catering premises. More attention should be paid to such higher level, better quality work, which has more significant effect on the satisfaction of customers and on word-of-mouth propaganda.

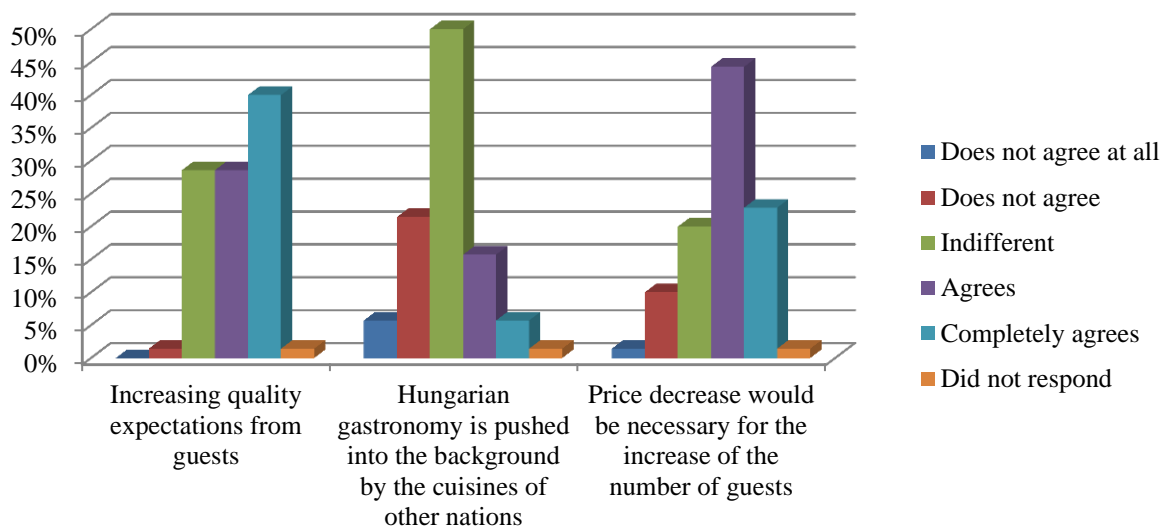
With my research, I was also looking for information about the development of clientele in the past 5 years. Respondents (54%) thought that the number of customers coming from their own settlements decreased, according to 37% it was constant, and only 6% thought this number was growing. According to 41% of them, the number of individual customers decreased, while this value was 27% at customers in groups. Merely 13% of them indicated the increase of individual customers, which is more significant in the case of customers in groups (40%). The number occasional customers decreased rather than grew, however, the number of more times regular customers decreased at a much higher rate (53 and 47%) than the rate of its growth (23 and 20%).

Based on my secondary research and professional experience - due to their determining role - I consider the selection of appropriate colleagues very important. The question was targeted at the general opinion of managers about employees in Hungarian catering. The survey was closed with a negative result. Respondents thought that only 20% of those who work in the Hungarian catering industry love their jobs, 23% like dealing with customers, 16% follow the trends of the sector and 11% of them are creative. It is not surprising that 51% reported about weak language knowledge. 'Medium characteristic' was the most frequently received reply to the given aspects.

I was also searching reply to the way managers evaluate their own staff. Here, I already received better results; however, they were still far from the ones I expected. 75% of the respondents stated that those employed in their own premises love their jobs; according to 86% of them colleagues like dealing with customers; 76% follow professional trends, 74% percent are creative, however, serious backlog can be experienced about their language knowledge (50%).

My survey was also directed at the motivation tools applied by the catering premises involved in the analysis in order to achieve higher level work as well as at the types of trainings they provide for their staff. 43% of the interviewed workplaces provide education and training, 80% of them support trainings and going to school. With regards to motivation, 50% of the examined catering establishments give rewards and 41% of them provide promotion possibilities. 94% of them do not support individual studies at all. In my opinion, the education and training of employees in catering is indispensable to increase the efficiency of their work, however, respondents still have a lack of awareness thereof.

The last question of my survey was intended to provide a summary of the analysis. Respondents had to provide comments on three statements. They mostly agreed with the increase in the quality expectations of customers (69%). Only 22% of the respondents agreed with the statement: 'Hungarian gastronomy is being pushed into the background by the cuisines of other nations'; 27% of them thought it would not happen. 67% of them responded 'yes' to the last statement: 'it would be necessary to decrease prices in order to increase the number of customers'; only 10% of them disagreed with it. On the contrary, the results of my research show that potential customers are less price sensitive, comfort is more determining in their selection of catering premises than the level of sales prices.



**Figure 1.: The opinion of managers about catering in Hungary**

Source: own edition (n=70)

The interviewed catering premises regularly provide discounts in order to increase their turnover (80%). Seasonal price cuts are on the second place (66%), which can also be regarded as discounts. There is a significant ratio of menus sold with discount as well (53%). Respondents provide club cards, regular customer cards, spirits at lower prices, as well as free internet access in order to increase the number of their customers. More of them indicated that discounts are provided mainly in the evening hours. In spite of this, special sales like 'happy hours' or 'one for two' are used by really few of them. Those restaurants which are planning to introduce newer discounts, would mainly introduce family discounts (17%) and cards to collect points (15%).

### 3.6. New or novel scientific results

Until now, the professional literature of marketing has not dealt either with the examination of satisfaction related to catering or with the research targets indicated in my dissertation or with the possible responses thereto. Although service marketing has a broad background of professional literature, catering is only included therein on the level of a few examples provided by their authors/researchers. Commerce, banking, education or public services are in their focus, which were described in several PhD dissertations besides the professional literature thereof. Concerning commercial catering – based on my studies of the professional literature – I think my study will fill a gap in this field. I did not find any dissertation (besides the GFK surveys) in Hungarian.

I will provide a summary of the most important results of my research as follows:

#### 1. The expectations of young and elderly segments are different in case of restaurants.

Based on my qualitative research (interviewing focus groups) it was proved that the expectations of the young and middle-aged people have several such features, which are different from each other in case of restaurants. The young segment regards price as their most important aspect, which significantly influences their selection of catering premises as well as their satisfaction. In contrast, middle-aged ones consider quality, selection and comfort more important. The young generation is not loyal, they would change in the case of more favourable conditions, however, discomfort (e.g.: distance, time) is not an obstacle to them. They choose such restaurants where there are 'special sales'; the same does not influence the older ones, it does not have an effect on the level of their satisfaction. Middle-aged ones are more loyal, they like offering their favourite

premises to others as well. The young find building relationships with the staff much more important, while the older ones would rather build their personal relations in the given catering establishments. It was also justified by the survey of the Nielsen Company that the population, although they rarely go to restaurants, mostly like having dinner in restaurants with their family members or friends.

## **2. Customers select restaurants most often and most willingly.**

According to the results of my customer research, a high ratio of the respondents preferred such restaurants, which had neutral profiles. The survey of GFK showed that 53% of graduates with higher education used the services of traditional restaurants and public houses in the previous year.

Thus, my conclusion was that potential customers are mainly conservative; they use special restaurants only at special occasions, they rarely choose them to be their regular places. This was also proved by my interviews with the professionals as they used specialties only in the preparation methods at a higher rate. Their selection is characterized by traditional products, significant proportion of them do not offer any novelty. Their kitchens have Hungarian style, characteristic of their region; they have probably developed into this direction because of the expectations of their customers. Most of the respondents did not agree with the statement that Hungarian gastronomy is being pushed into the background in the future.

They have higher expectations from restaurants; they find the atmosphere, the width and quality of selection more important than in the case of fast food restaurants or canteens. They would prefer to be customers in restaurants if they had enough discretionary income.

## **3. The number of guests can only slightly be increased by classical advertisements.**

The number of newer customers catering premises can obtain via advertisements, which are less personal, is insignificant, (mainly in franchise businesses) they rather get them through their satisfied and loyal clientele; they are sent by their customers. It is important to emphasize that those who choose their favourite places via advertisements are much more likely to have market-based approach and they are less loyal.

Although it was proven that advertisements have no significant influence on the increase of the number of customers, all restaurants used some kind of impersonal advertising tools.

It is also important to emphasize that those who select their favourite places on the basis of advertisements or comfort (e.g.: easy accessibility) are more likely to have market-based approach (e.g.: more favourable offers, prices of their competitors, etc.) than those who were offered the given restaurants by their acquaintances. The members of the previous group are much more likely to be influenced by their competitors than those who are attached to the catering establishments by their social relationships.

## **4. In case of professional competencies, catering employees have deficiencies.**

It was proven already by my first customer survey that even at their preferred catering establishments only 50% of the respondents were completely satisfied with the staff, their work was evaluated as medium level by 14% of them. This result may also contribute to the fact that those customers, who rarely go to restaurants find it insignificant to establish relationship with the staff in all surveys.

The profession also has the opinion that catering employees have deficiencies in case of professional competencies. They think, the love of their jobs, dealing with their customers, following their professional trends and creativity can be evaluated as 'medium' only. The results are a bit better when the staff of an own premise is to be characterized, but the result thereof is also often 'medium'.

In spite of this, the leaders of the catering sector do not always make the professional development of their staff possible. Only 43% of the respondents use trainings (the frequency thereof is not known) and only 6% of them support individual studies.

#### **5. Comfort (opening hours, accessibility, possibility of parking, environment) is a determining factor of satisfaction.**

The results of the first survey showed that, regarding their comfort, customers are not satisfied even with their favourite premises; they do not meet their expectations. According to the second survey, comfort has again a crucial role in connection with satisfaction. Based on the results of the factor and cluster analysis it can be stated that satisfaction is mostly influenced by the requirement of comfort after the selection of food and drinks and the quality thereof.

The interviewed restaurants try to meet the expectations of comfort at all levels.

Restaurants can be classified into two groups based on their character and the opinion of their customers. The first group contains canteens and fast food restaurants where customers have much more modest expectations from selection, quality and atmosphere as well. Customers rather use these premises for certain specific everyday food consumption, mainly at noon (lunch). My second group, which are mainly used for evening meals (dinner), includes restaurants, public houses and wayside inns. In these cases, social relationships, friendly atmosphere and regular place character are more important, which, in parallel, increase the value of selection, quality and atmosphere as well.

#### **6. Prestige aspects do not influence the selection of catering establishments and satisfaction.**

My hypothesis was not justified; the respondents in my qualitative research (mainly young ones) thought that their selection of catering establishments and their satisfaction are not influenced by prestige. This aspect was more significant by the older ones as they already have their established lifestyles possessing the material assets necessary thereto.

According to the results of my first customer survey, selecting a catering premise is not considered as an important decision (marks 1-2) by 28% of the respondents. They totally disagreed with the statement: "the kind of catering establishment that I prefer says a lot about me". I received the same result from my second survey; most of the respondents were indifferent to the topic or did not find it important at all.

#### **7. In case of those who visit restaurants more regularly, having emotional attachment is more characteristic than rationality.**

Those guests, who regularly visit certain restaurants, are not at all more satisfied than those who visit them less frequently. My second customer research showed that those customers who regard themselves as regular customers are willing to forgive minor errors and their loyalty is not influenced by price increase.

Customers rather have emotional attachment to their favourite restaurants than rational one. They have much stronger attachment to certain catering premises than it would be justifiable by market conditions. Direct personal contacts are much stronger retaining factors than price-quality ratio or special sales. Regular customers insist on their established habits, they attach to their regular places even if it is hard to be justified by rational arguments. The more favourable presence of merely quality or quantity factors is not enough to change regular catering venues. In my first research, 18% of respondents categorically rejected the market-based approach; the majority of them (45%) were indifferent.

#### **8. The potential customers of restaurants have such characteristics and expectations, by which they can be clustered.**

Customers who are present in the catering market cannot be regarded as homogeneous groups. Their expectations from services are different, they are willing to pay more or less and their buying habits are different. While interviewing customers, I obtained such data, by which I was able to develop groups and segments with similar features. The practical significance of segmentation stems from its close connection with profitability; it also enables a higher level of satisfying customer demands, supports customer retention, improves the efficiency of communication and generates development as well as innovation.

Five clusters were created from the available data and preliminary calculations by the use of the SPSS software program, providing a good illustration of such factors, which influence the consumer behaviour and satisfaction of the groups (the sample contained mainly young and middle aged segments).

The denomination of the five clusters: disloyal snobs, comfortable guests, reliable regular guests, 'everything is important' regular guests and comfortable snobs. My description of the groups may provide an opportunity for professionals dealing with catering to perform segmentation more precisely, to create target groups and to develop effective marketing strategies.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### 4.1. Accepting or rejecting the initial hypotheses

I formulated four hypotheses in the introduction of my dissertation and, on the basis of my research, I had to decide whether they were correct or I had to reject them. According to my results, two of my hypotheses were justified; however, two of them could only be partly accepted.

**Table 3. Evaluation of hypotheses**

Hypotheses	Accepting or rejecting
<b>H1.</b> While visiting restaurants; there is significant difference between the consumer behaviour of the young and the ones with family/middle-aged ones with different factors influencing their satisfaction.	<b>accepted</b>
<b>H2.</b> Customers' selection of restaurants, repurchase and satisfaction are significantly influenced by the type and character of catering venues, the consumer prices applied, advertisements and prestige aspects.	<b>partly accepted</b>
<b>H3.</b> The potential customers of restaurants have such characteristics and expectations, by which they can be clustered.	<b>accepted</b>
<b>H4.</b> The managers of catering, the professional leaders know the expectations of customers and try to suit them. They employ competent employees and put a great emphasis on the training and motivation of their colleagues.	<b>partly accepted</b>

Source: own edition

I accepted Hypothesis **H1.** and **H3.**, because they were fully justified by my research results.

Some statements of Hypothesis **H2.** could not be justified. The following ones were justified:

- Customers' satisfaction is significantly influenced by the types and characters of restaurants. Guests prefer visiting those restaurants that provide better quality services and higher level of environment.
- The work, professional knowledge and polite service of the staff also has significant effect on their satisfaction; thus creating their loyalty and repurchase. I was able to justify this statement in all of my researches.

The effect of applied consumer prices on satisfaction was only partly justified. They are an important factor for the young guests, however, they do not have significant role in case of older age groups.

I completely had to reject two statements:

- Restaurants' advertisements do not fulfil their role in the way they do it in case of retail or the purchase of consumer goods. Recommendations, word-of-mouth propaganda have much stronger effect on potential customers.

- Most respondents rejected prestige as such a factor, which influences the selection of restaurants and satisfaction.

I was able to justify the first part of Hypothesis H4., that is, professional leaders know the expectations of customers. They intended to meet expectations by the establishment of their premises, the selection they offer as well as by several services. However, they could not fully agree about the competence of employees, they are not completely satisfied with the staff even in their own venues. My last statement, according to which they pay considerable attention to the training of their staff, was also only partly justified.

#### **4.2. Possibilities of practical utilization and further elaboration of the topic**

Much more differentiated strategies are necessary in connection with catering than in the case of tourism. Each catering establishment needs its separate strategy to increase its profit, however, general guidelines cannot be defined. In my opinion, studying the clientele, more precise segmentation, establishing regular customer circle, providing the appropriate staff are much more important than material resources

The frequency of visits is much more seldom in Hungary than in Europe, only a small percentage of consumers visit restaurants on a daily or weekly basis. Mainly this should be changed to achieve higher turnover. The turnover of catering premises could also be increased, besides increasing the number of their customers, by making the visits thereof more frequent.

Loyal customers visit their favourite restaurant more frequently, and those who visit given premises more frequently, are more loyal thereto. That is, loyalty and the frequency of consumption are closely related to each other. Being well-known by the staff is important to regular customers.

Those, who use the services of catering premises less frequently, do not often try to visit the same places.

The personal relationship between customers and caterers is of special importance. Customers require care, thus it is necessary to create personal attachment between the two parties. The value of catering is provided by the quality of the work invested therein. In case 'good quality' is not included in the selection of food and drinks, personal relationships (empathy, attention, friendliness), services expectable from different types of catering establishments and sales methods; a regular customer circle cannot be expected by them either. Operational problems arising from the lack of coordination between front and back offices - the elimination thereof and the fine-tuning of the system belong to the tasks of the management - have a negative effective on their customers.

In order to be able to provide the strategy of promoting consumption and increasing profitability at Hungarian restaurants, mainly the objective characteristics of customers, the features of the space perceived thereby, the dual factors of their internal spaces (satisfaction-dissatisfaction, loyalty-disloyalty) as well as their relationships, networks, besides their position and situation in the social-economic space, had to be understood. I was able to achieve this by questionnaire-based surveys. By the determination of general connections, I intended to obtain response to the seemingly simple question of what makes a catering premise successful.

One of the success factors, in case of catering enterprises, is the common presence of motivation and being profit oriented both on the level of their owners and in any employee position. Enthusiastic work is a basic condition of success, but it is not enough. Customer satisfaction is at

the focus and consequently, it is important to know how, by what tools, it can be achieved. The same emphasis should be placed on economical operation as well.

In summary, I can see the practical utilization of my primary research in the fact that, by studying the results thereof, the practitioners of catering will be able to formulate their strategies in a more target-oriented and conscious way, they can build a more favourable image about their enterprises, they can learn more about the expectations of their customers and can prepare for the hosting of them.

My research cannot be closed by this dissertation as several questions remained open. I did not receive acceptable response to - among others - the following questions:

- Why do Hungarian customers rarely visit restaurants in spite of the relatively low level of consumer prices?
- What does the regional distribution of restaurants depend on?
- What makes a restaurant special and what special products are recommended to be sold?
- What communication tools can increase the turnover of restaurants effectively?
- What aspects could be used for the categorization of catering premises on the basis of their expected quality levels?

### **4.3. Suggestions**

The main target of my proposals is to increase profitability, to formulate regular customer circle, to increase market share, to ensure 'survival', which I formulated on the basis of a part of the results.

#### **1. The expectations of young and elderly segments are different in case of restaurants.**

- Problem solving 'tailored' to the customers, that is, adjusting selection, services and prices to customers.
- Establishing prosperous relationship with the clientele by using the opportunities and methods of relationship marketing (e.g.: CRM), focusing on good quality work and excellent communication.
- Further increase of the 'activity' of customers, which provides experiences and can also help economizing on resources in the catering premises (e.g.: buffet meals).
- Understanding and applying customer value (the value of products, services, staff and image) and customer cost (financial, time, energy and psychic costs) by the establishment of restaurants, in the daily sales work as well as by the formation of prices.

#### **2. The number of customers can only slightly be increased by classical advertisements.**

- Active PR work is necessary in each catering venue instead of classical advertisements. It is necessary to improve the image of restaurants; enterprises need to pay special attention to the information they publish about themselves. The published information should support the positioning strategies of catering premises in order to reach potential customers with it.
- The role of word-of-mouth propaganda needs to be further increased by intensive and high level work because there are few elements in catering that can be measured previously and objectively.
- Electronic channels as well as active appearance on social networking sites are indispensable elements of modern and at the same time more effective advertising.



### **3. In case of professional competencies, catering employees have deficiencies.**

- Increasing the competence of the staff by trainings, education (customer orientation, communication training), which can lead to competitive advantage. Employing well-educated colleagues.
- Appropriate motivation (wages) and promotion possibilities. Without loyal employees, there are no loyal customers either.
- Establishing standards about the appearance (e.g.: uniform, neatness) and rules of behaviour.
- Good organization of work between front and back offices, providing smooth communication.
- Implementation of handling internal complaints.

### **4. Comfort (opening hours, accessibility, possibility of parking, environment) is a determining factor of satisfaction.**

- In order to develop loyalty it is necessary to pay attention to the reasonable distribution of functional loyalty (location, opening hours), emotional loyalty (comfort, role of employees), deserved loyalty (good quality, satisfaction) as well as bought loyalty (discounts, coupons, short-term repurchase).
- Process planning needs special attention: restaurants need to be established in compliance with the physical and psychological needs of customers.
- The equipment and physical environment of venues should inform customers about the quality of the premises and they should provide them with 'experiences'.
- 'Objectification', which reflects the quality level of the restaurants, needs special attention to be paid to.
- Capacity needs to be adjusted to the peak demand in order not to lose any customers (the importance of comfort).
- Use of the technology of services, that is, application of modern machinery and equipment for the maximum satisfaction of customer demands.

### **5. In case of those who visit restaurants more regularly, having emotional attachment is more characteristic than rationality.**

- Establishing prosperous relationship with the clientele by using the opportunities and methods of relationship marketing (e.g.: CRM), focusing on good quality work and excellent communication.
- Regular customer programs besides promoting turnover can make customers and the application of CRM available.
- Fair handling of such complaints, which are due to the 'changeability' of services.
- It is not complaints that need to be eliminated, but errors must be prevented. Enterprises have no information about 90% of dissatisfied customers ('peak of the iceberg effect').

Customer satisfaction has a key role in the successful organization of all businesses, independently from whether they are regarded as products or services. Present customers need to be not only retained, but customer base also has to be expanded, which is only possible if target customers are completely satisfied with the catering establishments. The aim of this study was to examine such factors, which have a great effect on customer behaviours appearing in catering.

## **PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE THEMES OF MY DISSERTATION**

### **Proofread scientific articles in foreign language**

FODOR. M.–M. KATONA–K. MORVAY (2011): Model of the facilities of work places which influence the selection of the mode of institutional catering, Budapest: EU Working Papers BBS CCCT, Vol. XV, No. 2, ISSN 1418-6241,109-120. p.

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### **Proofread scientific articles published in Hungarian**

M. KATONA,–K. KARAKASNÉ, MORVAY,–M. MAGYAR, (2007): Measuring the Quality of Service and Customer Satisfaction. Budapest: ISSN 1587 5881, 56-64. p.

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