



"CUSTOMER IS ALWAYS RIGHT!" THE BEST TRAINING MANTRA?

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Abstract

You've heard the saying, "The customer Is Always Right." Chances are, as a customer, we felt that this is a catchy phrase "to be treated by being put on a pedestal". But it is believed that this phrase, popularized by Harry Gordon Selfridge in the early 1900s, could be wrong — and wrong for various of reasons based on ones reason to perception.

The thought behind this phrase is to build a sense of quality for customer service that can help the future of the industry understand the essence of customer service. But should it be used as a training mantra? To push employees to make decisions that would only benefit customers in hopes of building loyalty and trust for the sake of the organization, irrespective of the limits that one has to push themselves to. How does one know when and where do we draw the line to the phrase of "Customer Is Always Right". However, it is seen that this customer-centric ideology is getting outdated and is now no longer relevant. In fact, it is safe to say that this ideology could be creating an obstacle on our path to a truly exceptional customer service.

Hence it is safer said than done in these modern times we live in we need to have good reasons to ditch this century-old business saying and rebuild our customer service mantra over a new ideology. We begin our study to find out how many people will embrace this change in the ideology that may or may not change the face of service not only for the hospitality industry but also for other service sectors that take an inspiration from the way Hotel Employees serve their customers.

Keywords: Customer Is Always Right, Customer Is God, Service Sector, Business Mantra, and Training Mantra.

Introduction

When we say that the “Customer Is Always Right” it is important to know what we mean by the statement. As trainers or teachers we also need to know that sometimes customers are wrong and accordingly train our employees how to handle such customer’s dissatisfaction in the best way possible. Enforcing a “customer is always right” attitude can negatively impact not only the morale of one’s employee, but also their attitude towards customers. What we also need to consider is there will always be an unruly or rude customer that a service personnel will have to deal with as he/she works through their career and must also know how to defuse a situation that arise due to these customers in the best way possible. These customers are hard to manage, and despite their best efforts, it is not always possible to have a positive outcome. If one sides with these types of customers, they could be leaving a negative impression on their employees, while the organization may also lose lot of a good employees that may no longer have an interest to work there for the foreseeable future. Retaining quality employees who are trusted should be a top priority, as quoted by one of the world’s leading **Hotelier John Willard Marriott “If you take care of your people your people will take care of your customers and your business will take care of its self”**. If the customer is always right, it means employees have to take the abuse of the customers with zero support from management which means that there is something wrong with the ideology of Customer Is Always Right and a new change has to be embraced.

Considering, the 3 important qualities of customer service revolves around three “P”s:

P-Professionalism

P-Patience and

P- “People-first” attitude.

That we will discuss in detail as we move ahead in our study.

Objectives

- To understand the perception of the customers regarding the phrase Customer Is Always Right
- To understand the perception of the employee regarding the training mantra being Customer Is Always Right
- To understand the best possible way to replace said training mantra Customer Is Always Right with a more effective one.

Literature Review

Understanding Customer Service.

Every day we have hundreds of young minds with ideas to change their lives. Ideas where they want to spend their time building a bright future for themselves. But if that was possible, we would have a lot more than a billion start-ups rising each day crossing the previously built horizons of success. So, have you ever wondered that why haven't those ideas materialized or if they have then why haven't they seen much of success and have closed down? **NO. Nobody matters to us rather than ourselves.**

Customers are biggest bite/ contributors to any startup or any organization because without customers, we would end up owning nothing. **They are the game changers.** Customers are those players that determine who

should rule the market. So, it's safe to say that customers occupy the topmost position in the checklist of every business. Thus each entrepreneur should take care of the type of customers they are targeting.

When setting up a business, there's never a shortage of work to be done irrespective on the type of venture one is looking to enter. Whether we are focused on sales numbers, marketing strategies, or internal organization, there's always something that can be done by your team to improve. That being said, when it comes to customer service, it is extremely hard to gauge exactly where to focus the improvement required for customer satisfaction.

- Should one be adjusting their employee working hours? Which will in turn hamper the productivity of the employee?
- Should one be hiring more customer service employees?
- Maybe one should re-think their customer service approach altogether?

Answering any of these questions aren't easy. However, when combined, the real concern is where we focus first, posing the problem **“What are the 3 important qualities of customer service?”** Coming back to discuss in detail the 3 P's that we have mentioned in the introduction.

P- Professionalism

P - Patience and

P - “People-first” attitude.

P- Professionalism

When we talk about professionalism we need to refer to the attitude one takes towards their customers. However, when we serve a frustrated customer, staying poised can be easier said than done. It takes practice and experience to ensure you are confident & level-headed at all times. Professionalism means staying calm and collected at all times. If a customer is upset about a product, or experience or service, one needs to know how to tackle the situation, taking into consideration how they are to respond to the complaints with a decent tone and volume. Keeping calm, on the other hand, provides reassurances that their concern is solvable and that you're there to help. Mirroring a customer's behavior when they're unhappy rarely solves the problem but further enrages the customer behavior. Thus one must also be aware, when the situation is getting out of hand & would require to disengage the stronger approach and engage into a smarter one that will help the in defusing the situation. At the end of the day what you do represents your brand in a positive light.

P - Patience

It's one of the most important components of any interaction be it with a customer, yourself or your team members. Without it, a calm interaction can quickly become violent. Which means remembering that every customer and employee are different. Although there are obviously some common **“do's”** and **“don'ts”**, each customer and employee learns at a different pace and may respond to a common practice in a way we didn't expect. At times one needs to be flexible with company protocols in order to handle certain troublesome customers to show patience & the skill of defusing a heated up situation.

Although it's a thumb rule to have general service guidelines for yourself and your team, sometimes a customer may be a bit too dissatisfied and disgruntled with the service and may require assistance to experience the service that is provided for the average customer. In these situations, exceptional customer service involves stepping outside of your standard rules to lend that hand. In addition to being flexible, it is important to realize that exceptional customer service isn't **“one size fits all”**, and every customer is different & has unique

requirements. A second way one can work to build their patience into their service guidelines is by allowing customers to move at their own pace. Whether they need help understanding a difficult problem or answering a single question, which may seem simple to us, but confusing to the customer. By allowing them to control the narrative (i.e. not rushing them), one can efficiently and calmly bring them up to speed

P- "People-first" attitude.

Finally, the third "P," a people-first attitude, that will help build up professionalism and patience. With this attitude in mind, the customer service strategy will help reinforce the idea of a human connection. At the end of the day it's the relationship the server makes with their customer that reflects the brand of the organization being worked in.

Understanding the Concept of the Phrase "Customer Is Always Right"

The phrase "Customer Is Always Right" popularized by Harry Gordon Selfridge in the early 1900s, believed in the idea behind this phrase is to instill a sense of quality customer support. It also serves as a training mantra for various companies/organization to push employees to make decisions that would benefit customers in hopes of building customer loyalty and trust. However, it is believed that this customer-centric ideology is now outdated & no longer relevant. In fact, it could be creating an obstacle on the path to understanding what truly exceptional customer service is! Simply saying the customer is always right doesn't make it so. Customers are humans too & thus liable to make mistakes as well, what employees need to know is how to handle them accordingly. Having a "Customer Is Always Right" attitude can have a negative impact on the morale of your service team. There are always unruly and rude customers that one will have to handle in the service industry at some time or the other. Such customers are really hard to manage, and despite the team's best efforts, a positive outcome will not always be possible. Siding with these types of customers, could leave a negative impression on your employees.

Retaining quality employees that can be trusted and have confidence in their skills should be an organization's top priority. If we follow Customer Is Always Right, it means that service employees have to take the abuse of their customers without expecting any support from the management. A major role is played by the working conditions and company culture in keeping employees happy, productive and efficient. Employees tend to disengage when negativity upsets the balance in the workplace. This negativity in turn spreads to those customers who are amongst those who are not too demanding & require a very basic or simple service. Using the "Customer Is Always Right" in your daily business practices means that you can satisfy every customer 24/7. The largest and most successful business brands too believe that Customer Is Always Right as a training mantra is impossible and cannot be successfully implemented as people are unique and every person is different and have needs different from others. Every person has a different tastes in fashion, food, cars, homes, etc., and to attempt satisfying every customer's needs, is in literal sense impossible.

Research Methodology

Data collection: Primary data is collected through feedbacks, Questionnaires, and one to one interviews.

Sampling Techniques: This topic of research is associated with the local service employee, culinary professionals from India. Stratified random sampling technique followed for this purpose.

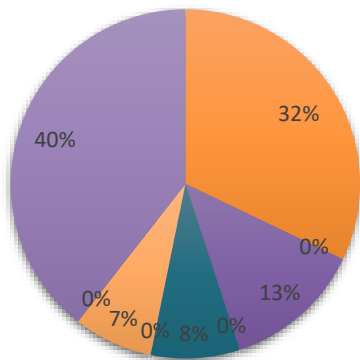
Sample Size: 109 Questionnaires were collected from the population and the analysis for the same is done to support the objectives of this research paper.

Population: Educated, mid age, salaried/entrepreneurs people selected from all over the India to understand their opinion on the concept of "CUSTOMER IS GOD!" THE BEST TRAINING MANTRA?

Limitation: As mentioned in the introduction we are moving into a debate of - Does the notion of “Customer is always right” still suit as the best training mantra or do we need to start looking on a new one. We will have a number of contradicting views as there is a vast majority that will hands down believe in the above phrase being the best training mantra rather than moving on to a newer belief.

Data Analysis

Monthly household income in INR



To get an idea of the various salaried personnel that will be answering the quiz.

FIG 1.1

Figure 1.2 shows that there is a vast 63% of population looking to dine out at least once a week while a considerable amount of 19% planning on dining twice a week.

How often you dine/ order from restaurant

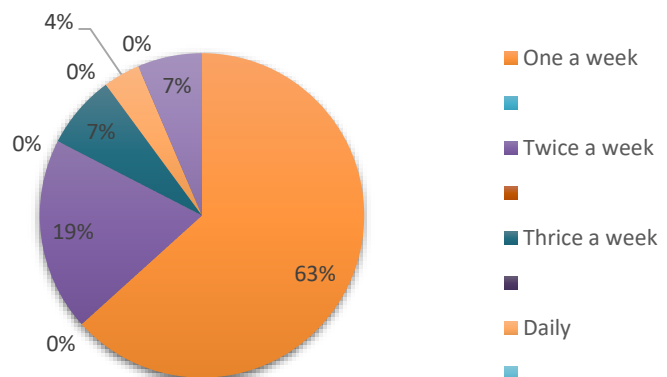
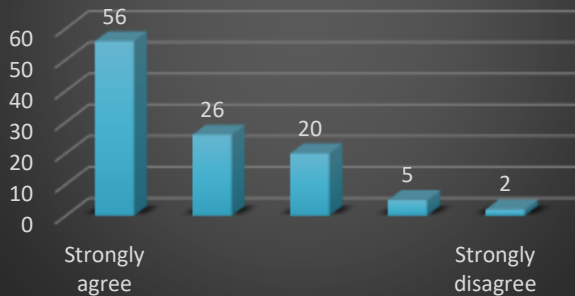


FIG 1.2

The restaurants should always have all the item mentioned on their menu available.

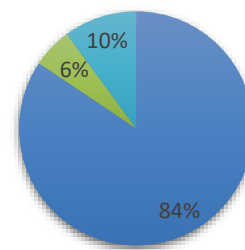


A very strong 56 % of the population strongly agree that the outlet must be held accountable for the availability of each and every item that is there on their menu.

FIG 1.3

Fig 1.4 shows 84% of the people that have taken the survey believe that restaurant along with their working staff needs to make sure that their customer are served to the best of their abilities, as they are not only paying for the food served but also the service they are receiving.

It is the restaurants duty to completely satisfy the customer



■ Yes ■ No ■ May be

G 1.4

The restaurants should please the customers even if it goes against their policies

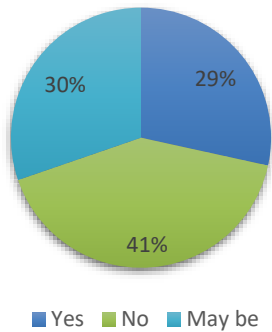


FIG 1.5

Here we see a very decent 41 % of the people believe that the customer cannot expect each and every of their demands to be met at a single place. It means that if any customer is going overboard with their behavior or actions the restaurant has every right to take necessary actions to defuse the situation and get things under control. Also it is not just about keeping the customer satisfied but also about keeping the staff contented.

Fig 1.6 shows that in today's day and age where everyone is so socially active we can see that there's a good 30%-40% of people that would like to share or consider sharing their reviews of the outlet with their friends and family

I will Share the experience of my visit if negative with my friends, family or on social media



to

Fig 1.6

An even greater percentage of people would like to prefer voicing their complaints regarding their restaurants directly to the restaurants personal page or survey so as not to defame the restaurant for future thus giving them a chance to improve

Being regular customer at a said restaurant will you revisit the restaurant if you are treated inappropriately cause of a certain incident ?

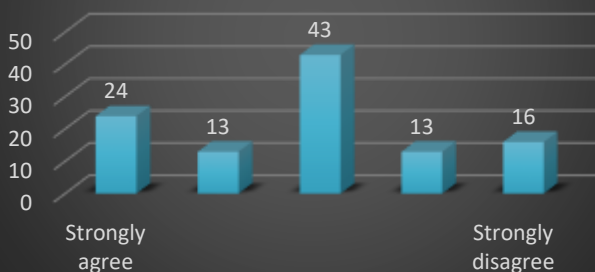


FIG 1.7



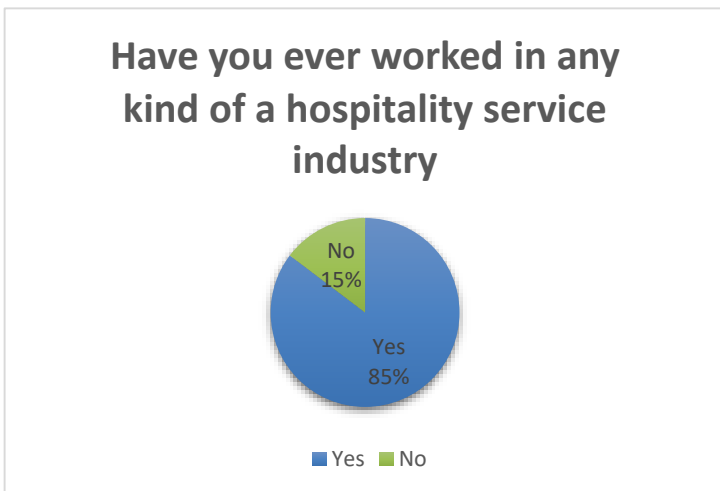
In Fig 1.8 we see that there are 43% of people will attempt to go for another time to the restaurant another time to see if there have been changes made from their previous experience or are just following their same old ways

FIG 1.8



We can see over here that almost 90% of people would like to go to any place for the food that is being served over the service provided or pricing or location which means that people are will to pay more for a really good meal being served to them.

FIG 1.9



The fig1.10 show that a majority people in the concept of CIG but we can also see there are other who thing otherwise and are looking for a better training mantra.

FIG 1.10

Further we look out on the perspective of people that have worked in hotel industry to get a better understanding of the CIG concept

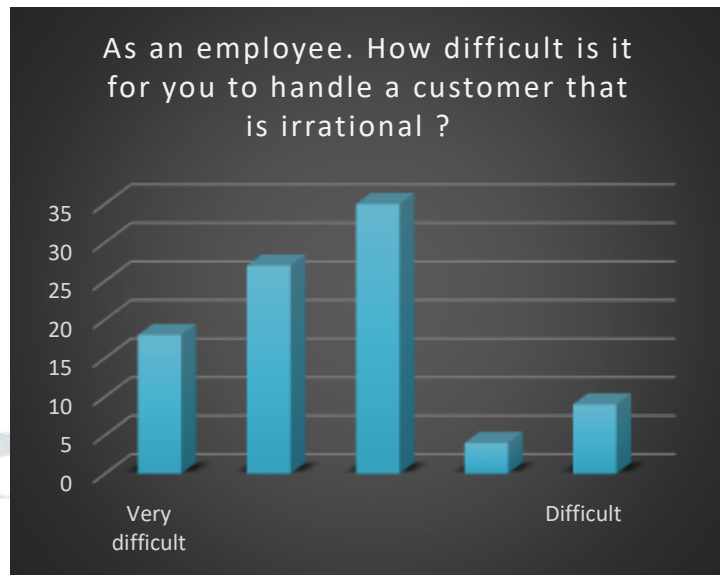


FIG 1.11

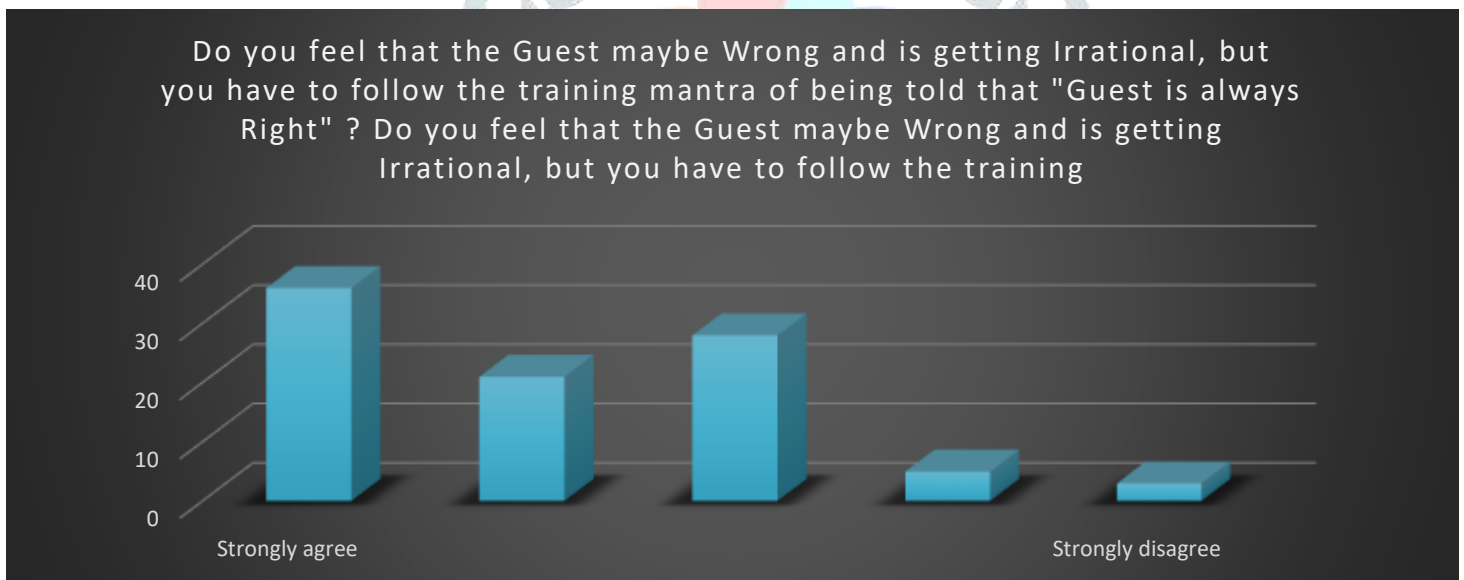


FIG 1.12

Here in fig 1.12 & 1.13 we can see that there is a medium level of people that believe that they can tackle any kind of customer problems that they face while we also see a stronger portion of people believing that certain customers do behave irrational and is not always to treat them with the customer is right mantra. We also see a good chunk of people that believe that certain customer are very difficult to handle and inapplicable to the CIG motive and expect a better and newer mantra.

When we say Customer is God should we draw a line or go all out for customer satisfaction

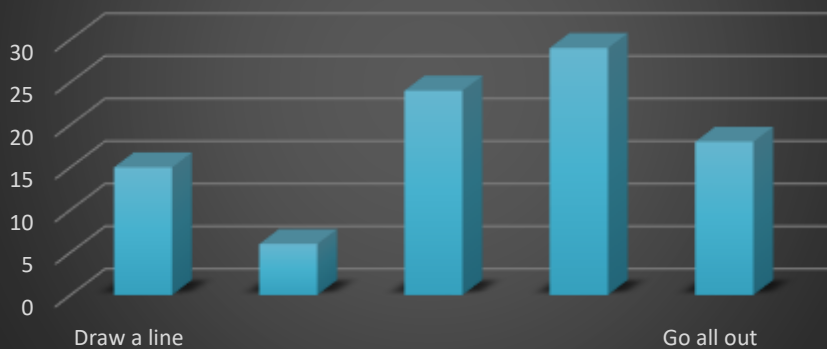


FIG 1.13

In the above fig we can also see a very fluctuating amount of responses to the limit to where the line has to drawn in regards to customer satisfaction in regards to CIG. While there is a major amount that believe that one must go all out to satisfy the customer there is also those that believe that there needs to be a line to the extent one can go for the sake of customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

"Customer Service Is God" (CSIG)

Inspired by an article published by (<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/customer-may-be-king-but-customer-service-is-god/article23052458.ece>) on May 2nd 2011, its time we should evolve to an updated mantra that could be "Customer may be King" but, "Customer Service Is Godly" (CSIG), where one's aim should be to give an exceptional service to the customers, because great customer service generates revenue! At the end of the experience a happy customer will pay more and would enthusiastically spread the word about your products and service. This would in turn bring new customers, thus generating more revenue. Plus, with great customer service, your customers will remain loyal because, more than the product they're a fan of your service and easy interactions. Also if we learn anything from the recent history since 2020 lockdown that has showed exactly why loyal customers are necessary to build a thriving business

This is the first step towards providing the kind of service that mesmerizes your customers. You got to embrace the changes that took place in 2020. The entire world, including your customers and employees, started shifting towards the Work From Home (WFH) way of working. People are still adapting to it and nobody knows how when will this adjusting stop given the current situation we are living in and an ever evolving virus we have to sustain against. But this is where one has to think long-term and take small steps towards getting your customer service efforts streamlined again.

A good starting point would be to train employees and teams on the enhanced importance of great customer service going forward. Why? Because 86% of buyers will pay more for getting great customer service! You can command higher or have even premium prices if your employees are giving customers the best possible service and support. Plus, when you train your employees to do their job well, they feel more involved which helps them grow and perform better. So, why would they keep the customers happy with their service and support?

As Kevin Kelly explained in his famed essay, One doesn't need millions of customers, clients and fans to be successful. All they need are thousands of true fans.

It's OK — let customers be wrong.

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