
A Dining Experience Case Study for Hospitality Management Teaching and Learning

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Introduction

Enhancing teaching and learning experiences is what all instructors strive for, through different teaching methods instructors aim to deliver the knowledge and at the same time develop students' analytical and critical thinking capabilities, the utilization of case studies has proven to be highly effective in achieving this mission.

Case study method is a teaching approach that presents students with an unusual situation or scenario, demanding them to analyze it, and through discussions propose solutions and suitable courses of action. The application of case study method in teaching and learning allows both students and instructors to interact interchangeably, students are engaged in deep active learning, and instructors assume a facilitator role rather than being the expert.

The case study method application goes beyond the traditional instructor centered teaching approach to a more practical learner centered teaching and learning approach (Schröter & Röber, 2022).

As a teaching strategy, case studies must be orchestrated by an experienced instructor, with the active participation of the students, this method particularly relies on instructors to lead students to induce new knowledge (Minniti et al., 2017; Wassermann, 1994).

A teaching case study comprises a "Case" and a "Teaching Note". The "Case" is the issue or dilemma to be studied and analyzed by learners, while the "Teaching Note" is a guide to be used by instructors, it offers the case teaching plan with application instructions (McGuire & Whaley, 2017).

The aim of the current study is to demonstrate, analyze, and interpret a real dining experience case in order to be used in teaching by hospitality management instructors. It is an opportunity for hospitality management students to learn how to evade service failures, create successful memorable guest experiences, and to apply critical thinking techniques.

Theoretical Background

Case studies are defined as stories that represent real and complex incidents, which involve dilemmas or problems that could be answered and solved through discussions and brainstorming. A case study should be based on the description of a particular situation or problematic incidents to which students can relate (Davis, 1993; Roell, 2019).

A teaching case is a real-life issue, problem or paradox written in a story-like style, with events naturally flowing in an intriguing sequence that attracts the reader. The case should start with a strong opening statement, case characters (actors) roles must be convincing, and the case dilemma (plot) should be clear enough allowing for debates, discussions, and finally, decision making (Sahay, 2018).

A good case study for teaching should possess the following criteria (Lundberg et al., 2001; Lynn, 1999; McGuire & Whaley, 2017; Pearce, 2002; Thiel et al., 2013; Yin, 1994):

- Realistic and significant
- Comprehensive and intriguing
- Evidence based and debatable
- Artistically written and dramatic

By presenting a problematic situation scenario supported by questions leading to discussions and finally proposed solutions, case scenario-based teaching encourages learners to engage in reflective practice. It has been argued that this teaching method develops students' critical thinking, communication skills, and teamwork. Case studies develop students' abilities to analyze, evaluate and create, consequently, moving to the upper levels of Bloom's revised taxonomy (remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Herreid et al., 2011; Krathwohl, 2002; McDade, 1995; Popil, 2011).

For instructors, this pedagogical method provides the opportunity for a custom-made learning experience for students through in-depth study of a real-life issue creating deeper understanding of the study course (Seshan et al., 2021). Research showed that instructors who used the case study method have improved their students' retention of knowledge better than when applying the traditional lecturing techniques (Grassberger & Wilder, 2015; Nkhoma et al., 2014).

Despite the fact that case studies play a significant role in the students' learning process giving them a deeper knowledge and increasing their critical thinking capabilities (Grassberger & Wilder, 2015; Herreid, 2009; Nkhoma et al., 2014), on the instructors' side; adopting this technique requires the careful selection or even preparation of suitable cases to be used in teaching, which is a challenging, time consuming, and effort demanding process (Penn et al., 2016).

Teaching case studies selection or preparation depends on factors such as: learners study specialization, program/academic level, course nature and aim, and intended learning outcomes (Schröter & Röber, 2022). Furthermore, the successful application of case study method in classroom relies on the suitability of the method for the curriculum nature, compactness of the case (story) structure, how well the story leads to analysis and discussion, and of course in class time management (Guess, 2014).

The teaching case links theory to practice and therefore prepares management students for their future organizational roles. Students are exposed to real-life situations through comprehensive interactions between themselves and their instructors, these interactions enhance students' management and problem-solving abilities, and decision-making capabilities (Barnes et al., 1994; Minniti et al., 2017).

Teaching Note

The Case Components

- **Story**
A dining experience that went awry
- **Place**
A five-star deluxe hotel restaurant
- **Occasion**
Friday brunch (From 12:00 till 16:00)
- **Participants**
Two guests
Hotel general manager (GM)
Restaurant manager - Restaurant staff
Head chef - Chef
Security manager - Security officers
A doctor
Duty manager

Case Study Summary

The hospitality industry is a people's industry, interactions between service providers and service recipients cannot be evaded. The goal is to adhere to standards, procedures, and sound managerial practices to assure the creation of a memorable guest experience, an experience that guests would appreciate and would like to live over and over again, an experience through which a positive word of mouth is created and would encourage others to try it. The industry strives on the adoption of high-class service attitude, without it the very essence of hospitality is lost.

This case describes an unpleasant dining experience in a five-star deluxe hotel restaurant where the guest noticed a worm moving on his plate after he had finished eating many seafood items from the buffet. The interaction between the guest and the hotel affiliates was not up to standard which led to service failure, guest frustration, and a ruined dining experience.

An experience that deviates from its optimum blueprint or ends unrecovered can render damages to a brand image. The current case is an opportunity for hospitality management students to learn how to practice proper management, evade service gaps, eliminate failures, handle complaints/critical incidents, and to create delightful memorable experiences. Teaching and learning is a step that is complemented by the hundreds and hundreds of customer service training hours provided to the industry affiliates.

TEACHING AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this case study, students are intended to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of management principles and functions*
Management is a science, and an art. Science necessitates the knowledge of the principles and functions that managers at all managerial levels should follow and practice. Delegation and empowerment are the deciding factors in the success of a hospitality establishment, how the management perceive their employees and the confidence they put in them to handle day to day guest interactions create the strong organizational culture that characterizes and shapes world class successful brands. The art side of management is shown during employees-guests interactions by going the extra mile to please guests creating successful memorable experiences.
- Manage a win/win guest experience*
Managing guest experience stages is a must to achieve brand loyalty. Each stage is performed by service performers interacting with guests, consistency is the key. Start strong and end stronger creating a delightful memorable experience.
- Demonstrate an understanding of food and beverage service and management*
Understanding the special nature of food & beverage operations, its products and services is important. Job descriptions and roles should be emphasized. Principles of food safety and hygiene must be followed.
- Create service blueprints*
Service characteristics are so important to understand in order to achieve successful customer encounters, minimal complaints, and maximum profits. Critical points of success and failure (Service Blueprint) must be clear for all affiliates to achieve a smooth operation.
- Practice complaints handling positively and effectively*
Well-handled complaints enhance the mental image of an organization and its credibility. It is so important to understand how the discrepancy between expectations and perceptions shape customers' evaluations of services and products they experience or consume.

Target Audience

The case is suitable for Hospitality Management Specialization Students.

Teaching Approach and Strategy

1. Theoretical Background

To set the scene, and to gain maximum benefit of the current case, it is preferable to use it after the following topics have been covered (Or ask students to dedicate some time reading on the following topics):

- Experience Economy
- Food and Beverage Operations Management
- Management
- Managing Service and Complaints Handling
- Service Blueprint

Suggested Readings

- Barrows, C., Powers, T., & Reynolds, D. (2012). *Introduction to management in the hospitality industry* (10th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
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2. Before Class Assignments

Before class, students are required to read the case and go through the proposed case discussion questions and suggested readings (If not covered in class by the instructor).

3. In Class Activities

In class, conduct a three-phase interaction scheme (BDD): Breakdown (Case), Discuss (General), and Debate (Role play):

- **Breakdown (Case) - A 30-minute activity**

This part demands that you start to breakdown the case scenario into small pieces of actions and interactions linking theory to practice and pointing out guest experience success/failure points.

- **Discuss (General) - A 30-minute activity**

Based on the discussion questions assigned to students and case reading tasks, allow students to spontaneously express and share their ideas, opinions, and conclusions. As much as possible try to categorize what the students come out with, preferably, write the categorized ideas on a flip chart or white board so that everyone can see and contribute to it.

- **Debate (Role play) - A 30-minute activity**

Based on the previous activity, you will get to know the students' points of view and opinions, which will allow you to divide them into two teams, a team would assume the role of the guest and the other team would assume the role of the hotel management. Start and manage the debate then switch roles. As a starting point for the debate consider the following controversy:

- The guest was a regular Friday brunch patron for nearly six months, translated to twenty-four successful Friday brunches, and just one failure caused the guest to lose faith in the whole brand...?! DEBATE.

Assessment

The students will be required to write a report based on the case studied.

The following are proposed themes for the student report:

1. Based on the case incidents, how would you act? and what would you do? if you were:
 - The GM
 - The Guest
2. Blueprint the case and point out the gaps, then, propose amendments for the stated service failure points.

A Final Word

This case is addressed to hospitality management students and instructors. For students, a case is provided which comprises three sections: The first is a controversial dining experience. The experience stages are listed in chronological order showing the actions and interactions between the guest and the property affiliates. The second section shows the emailed response of the property GM regarding the guest complaint. The third section sums up the case events and proposes some stimulating discussion questions to help students reflect on the case. For instructors, a teaching note with clear applicable steps is offered ready to be utilized in class teaching.

Overall, the case is intended to be directly used in teaching or to be a model that informs and facilitates the structuring of other hospitality management discipline teaching cases. When structuring a case study scenario for hospitality management three points should guide the process:

- Hospitality management as a discipline informed by academic teaching rules and practices
- Hospitality as an industry with its business guided implications and its nature as a people's industry
- The art of storytelling. The case events should be clear, the plot should be intriguing and compact

Set the case goals, choose a proper stage, players (characters), and sequence of events, use the art of storytelling to convey information, ethics, and proper practice lessons. Be clear about what is required of the students to prepare before class and what sort of activities are to be done in class. Stimulate discussions, debates, and critical thinking to engage students in deep active learning.

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