

Industry Weekly Digest

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management



Customer Choice in Restaurants

Customers' restaurant choices for their Food and Beverage products can be complex. Besides the external influences such as cultural and social factors that have impact on buyer behaviour, there are also many personal and psychological factors to consider in the customers' decision-making process (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006).

In this digest, **Leon van Achterbergh** provides further insight.

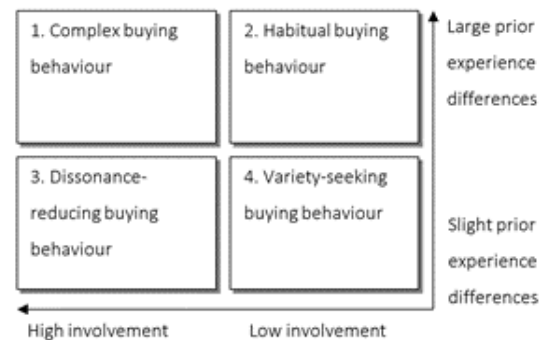
Have a great weekend!



Buying Decision Behaviour in Restaurant Customer Choices

Leon van Achterbergh

Kotler and Armstrong (2006) devised a useful matrix illustrating types of buying decision behaviour that typify the range of differences between restaurant choices. It has been adapted to apply to 'prior experience discrepancies', as illustrated below:



“

This simple theoretical model shows us some categorisation of the types of buying behaviour restaurants face

“

Buyers' different behaviours when faced with various degrees of consumer process involvement, and discrepancies relating to prior experiences of the product or service are depicted on the above figure. In the 'complex' type (1), the involvement is high and prior experiences relating to the product has not been internalised (i.e. fragmented experiences, insufficiently informed). Thereby the learning process will have to go through a validating of beliefs, adapting attitudes, and subsequent reflection on the options before a choice is made. Here an example would be an exotic fine dining experience in a foreign country. Alternatively, the 'habitual' type (2) requires low process involvement, with high internalised prior experiences. These customers know what to expect, and it becomes mostly a choice of habit. They do not have to go through the belief-attitude-behaviour progression. An example here would be the customary visit of a convenient fast-food outlet around the corner. The 'variety-seeking' types (4) are more risk-taking toward new experiences but not very involved, whereas the 'dissonance-reducing' types (3) are forever validating their purchasing decisions (i.e. high involvement) even though their prior experiences have been adequately internalised. An example of the former is randomly choosing a menu item that was not tried before, without really validating the choice. An example of the latter would be that of a customer nit-picking because of diminutive annoyances from expected service levels were not achieved.

This simple theoretical model shows us some categorisation of the types of buying behaviour restaurants face. It effectively illustrates buyers' different behaviours when faced with various degrees of consumer process involvement, and the discrepancies relating to prior experiences of the products.

Reference:

Kotler, P & Armstrong, G (2006) *Principles of Marketing*, 11th Edition Brunel University, Pearson UK