

CUSTOMER PROFILE AND VIEWS OF THE SELECTED AMMA UNAVAGAM IN COIMBATORE AND CHENNAI

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Abstract

The World economy is more integrated with faster communication and henceforth diet transition is more inevitable. This study expresses the views of the customers on the budget canteen amma unavagam, which is a food subsidization programme enacted by the Government of Tamil Nadu. The study was undertaken with the objective to elicit opinion from customers on the quality, quantity, pricing and hospitality at the food service in Coimbatore and Chennai. A total of 400 customers in Coimbatore and Chennai were approached to elicit the demographic profile and views on quality of the food service with a questionnaire. Customers showed a high level of satisfaction to the subsidized food service as it tracks the development of Below Poverty Line Population groups. Customers also offered suggestions that would help the growth of the food service with greater customer satisfaction.

Introduction

India is home to a quarter of the world's hungry, according to United Nations data, despite being one of the

biggest food producers and experience years of rapid economic growth (Gagarin, 2010). Consumers prefer more convenience foods but may not like food additives or higher costs. Reacting to fads of unpredictable duration and dealing appears to be a contradictory trend among the problems faced by food processors and distributors (Allen, 2003). In many industries, convenience goods and products are offered to consumers through company-controlled retail outlets. Examples of these products include packaged products, gasoline, bank services, and fast foods, where the respective outlets are supermarket chains, service stations, branch banks and franchised restaurants. Common to each of these product-outlet pairs are key problems involving the creation and evaluation of outlet building and development programmes (Amber, 2007). All subsidies are implicit transfers and food subsidies are a common method of attempting to reduce food insecurity and because of financial constraints. They have become less popular in recent years, with greater emphasis placed on employment and productivity-raising interventions. Subsidies with direct

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interventions such as school-feeding programmes are pursued with the emphasis on targeting and cost-minimisation and have become more pronounced with the introduction of economic reform programmes (Javier et al., 2005). In India, as well in other developing countries, there is evidence that the effectiveness of some vast public programmes designed at the national level has been consistently undermined by serious corruption at the local level. The intended beneficiaries fail to see benefits from programmes that draw significant amounts of government resources. Improved monitoring and enforcement from higher levels of government may prove effective, but may be too costly in many circumstances, even with improved technology (Ramachandra, 2011). The Government spends ₹ 3.65 to deliver ₹ 1 for food while 57 percent of subsidized food grains do not reach the intended beneficiaries. Hence the study was undertaken with the objective to elicit opinion from the customers on the quality of food service at amma unavagam in Coimbatore and Chennai.

Methodology

Amma Unavagam, a subsidised food service initiated by the Government of Tamil Nadu were selected for the study. A total of four centres with two each from Coimbatore and Chennai were selected, by purposive sampling method. A total of 400 customers comprising 100 customers in each centre were approached to elicit the views of the

Amma Unavagam, using the formulated interview schedule. General information on customer's demographic profile including name, age, educational qualification, income status, marital status was elicited. Other details such as frequency of visit to the outlet, quality and quantity of foods provided, hygiene and hospitality at the centres were found out from the customers. The preferences and suggestions from the customers were also collected in order to explore recommendations to the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Results and Discussion

Age wise distribution of the customers

Table 1 depicts the age wise distribution of the customers dining at the selected amma unavagam.

Table 1. Age-wise Distribution of the Customers

N=400

Age in years	Number	Percent
20-30	50	12.5
30-40	75	18.8
Above 40	275	68.8

The details on age-wise distribution of the customers visiting amma unavagam revealed that 68.8 percent of the customers ranged above 40 years indicating the high level of popularity and dine outs by these age groups followed by 18.8 percent of the customers aged between 30 and 40 years and 12.5 percent of the customers from 20 to 30 years of age.

Gender-wise Distribution of the Selected Customers

It is observed that 88.8 percent of the customers were males and 11.2 percent of the customers were females. There were more number of male customers to the centres owing to the reasons that the customers were employees, job seekers and the centres had easy access from work place, bus stations and railway stations and low cost.

Educational Qualification of the Customers

The educational qualification of the customers visiting the selected amma unavagam is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Educational Qualification of the Customers
N=400

Educational status	Number	Percent
Illiterate	180	45.0
High school education	165	41.2
College education	55	13.8

Inspite of the educational facilities available in both the cities, 45 percent of the customers who visited the food service outlets were illiterates. Customers with high school education were 41.2 percent and 13.8 percent were graduates. Illiterates comprised of daily labourers of near-by petty shops had food at these food service centres and since the price of the dish is very low and food was also provided at adequate quantities. It was also heartwarming that 55.1 percent were literates and were in search of job, preparing for civil service examinations and other examination by the Government and Private sectors.

Occupation of the customers

Table 3 depicts the occupation details of the customers.

Table 3. Details of Occupation of the Selected Customers

N=400

Occupation	Number	Percent	Chi-Square
Job seekers	30	7.5	56.4**
Daily labourers	170	42.5	
Auto drivers	15	3.8	
Office assistants	115	28.7	
Sales representatives	48	12.0	
Higher professionals	22	5.5	

** Significant at one percent level

From the 400 selected customers, 42.5 percent were daily labourers and had more frequent dine out at amma unavagam. Daily labourers were predominant customers to these food service due to the economic affordability. Besides this, 7.5 percent customers were job seekers. There was one percent significance observed in the occupation of the customers who visited the food service operation.

Income Range of the Customers

The customers with lower income group had more frequent dine outs to the

tune of 37 percent. Majority of the customers were with income below ₹ 3000. However, the studies across the wide range of countries at various income and consumption levels are not very strong variants and leaves room for additional explanatory factors like culture, religion and possible choices.

Frequency of Dine Outs by the Customers

The frequency of dine outs by the customers at amma unavagam is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Frequency of Dine Outs

N=400

Frequency of dining out	Number	Percent	Chi-Square
Daily	178	44.5	112.475**
Weekly once	107	26.7	
Once in a month	70	17.5	
Rarely	45	11.3	

** - Significant at one percent level

The details on the frequency of dining out, showed that 11.3 percent of the people dined out rarely. It is evident that 44.5 percent customers dined daily and 17.5 percent of the customers visited once in a month. There was one percent significance observed in the frequency of dining out at these subsidised food service when statistically interpreted with Chi-square. According to Nielson, (2010) the majority of global customers (44 percent) dine out between one and three times per

week, as many as 38 percent only enjoy a meal out-of-home once a month or less. Consumers in the Asia Pacific markets dine out more frequently than consumers in other regions, particularly in Hong Kong, where nearly one-third (31 percent) report that they eat at restaurants everyday or more than once everyday.

Quality of the Foods Served

Customer satisfaction for quality of the foods consumed at the selected amma unavagam is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Customer Satisfaction with the Quality of Foods Served

N=400

Quality of foods	Amma Unavagam			
	Coimbatore		Chennai	
	No.	%	No.	%
Sensory attributes	190	95	198	99
Food hygiene	174	87	182	91
Personnel hygiene	188	94	192	96
Environmental hygiene	188	94	192	96

It is heart warming to note that 95 percent and 99 percent of customers in Coimbatore and Chennai respectively were satisfied with the sensory attributes of the food namely the appearance, texture, flavour and taste and relished the foods during hunger. Customers opined that food hygiene can be further improved through providing dishes in disposable plates or placing plastic sheets below the foods

during service. Besides wearing of aprons and hand gloves by the employees at the amma unavagam, customers expressed that personnel hygiene at the centres has to be improved.

Quantity of the Foods Provided

Customer satisfaction towards the adequacy of foods supplied by the selected amma unavagam is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Customer Satisfaction with the Quantity of Foods Served

N=400

Quality of foods	Amma Unavagam			
	Coimbatore		Chennai	
	No.	%	No.	%
Adequacy of dishes per portion	190	95	200	100
Adequacy of accompaniments	14	7	48	24
Variety in dishes	22	11	66	32

The customers were satisfied with the quantity of foods provided per portion at amma unavagam both in Coimbatore and Chennai. However they expected

additional accompaniments for the main dishes. Suggestions such as the provision of variety in the dishes in addition to idli and pongal for the breakfast and providing

accompaniments especially a vegetable poriyal for sambar rice and pickle for curd rice in the lunch menu were emphasized.

Cost of the Foods Served

The cost of the foods served at the amma unavagam is given in Table 7.

Table 7. Cost of Foods with Subsidised Cost Proportion

Items	Qty (g/No.)	Actual food cost ₹	Subsidised food cost ₹	Difference ₹
Idli	1 No	12.50	1	10.50
Pongal	250	20	5	15
Sambar Rice	350	25	5	20
Curd rice	350	25	3	22
Chapathi	2No	30	3	17
Curry leaves rice	350	25	5	20
Lemon rice	350	30	5	25

The food cost was calculated in par with open market. Actual food cost varies in wide range with the subsidized food cost. Actual cost of two idlis was ₹ 12.50 and it was sold at the rate of ₹ 2. In the subsidized rate sambar rice and curd rice were sold at ₹ 5 and ₹ 3, whereas the actual cost was ₹ 25 per portion. Since subsidy pricing was followed the government extends 67 percent financial support to contribute to the growth of economic sector of the country. The difference in pricing is borne by the Government of Tamil Nadu to ensure the low cost menu. As the price is affordable by all the customers, especially the weaker section of the population they were fully satisfied with the price.

Hospitality at the Food Service Outlets

Ninety eight percent of the customers were satisfied with the service of hygienic

food. Suggestions were offered by two percent of the customers to promote further hygienic practices in the foods service area. Hospitality is the relationship between the guest and the host, or the act or practice of being hospitable. The customers were satisfied with the hospitality by the employees at all the studied centres in Coimbatore and Chennai.

Conclusion

The subsidized food service system has an enormous role to satisfy the customers, through provision of food in par with the demands. The study reveals the higher levels of customer satisfaction for the subsidised food centres as it tracks the development of the Below Poverty Line population. Hence the subsidised food systems should be encouraged to enhance economic development of the population to

access food, which is one of the basic necessities of the humankind. Government of Tamil Nadu is the forerunner of such subsidised food service and it will be of true

success with joint efforts of the customers, employees and the Government to provide a wholesome and nutritious food for the quality living of the population.

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