

A Review of Cost Reduction Strategies – With Special Reference to Food and Beverage Industry in Uttarakhand

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Article Info

Page Number: 554 - 564

Publication Issue:

Vol 72 No. 1 (2023)

Abstract

It is a known fact that hospitality industry can contribute a lot for the growth and progress of any country or a state. An extraordinary increase in the diversity, demand for, as well as the quality of product and service categories has occurred as the sector has grown. These factors have led to a strong competition in which customers are tougher to target and costs are challenging to control. There is a constant flux of factors affecting the food and beverage supply chain in the modern era and many companies are shifting their attention to processes like cost reduction, supplier relationship management and contract management in order to minimize the impact of these factors on their profitability. Cost-cutting strategies are examined in this article, as well as the company's own internal operations including the costs of retaining highly-trained personnel, locating the correct high quality but cost-effective suppliers, and keeping track of every purchase. In an industry that is susceptible to high waste, spoilage, and inventory issues, there is a pressing need for corporations to acquire, obtain, and stock with the utmost care. There has been a lot of anger and even the demise of certain businesses in the F&B sector recently because of how much trash is generated. Restaurants everywhere are scrambling to find ways to keep diners happy and minimize loss via attrition. Starting cost-cutting initiatives has become an essential aspect of F&B strategy since it has improved performance, reduced waste, and increased overall customer satisfaction by reducing wasteful expenditure and boosting savings.

Article History

Article Received: 15 October 2022

Revised: 24 November 2022

Accepted: 18 December 2022

Keywords: Cost, industry, inventory, profitability, supplier, strategizing, Food and Beverage.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is a constant flux of factors affecting the food and beverage supply chain in the modern era and many companies are shifting their focus to processes like cost reduction, supplier relationship management and contract management in order to minimise the impact of these factors on their profitability. An extraordinary increase in the diversity, demand for, as well as the quantity of product

and service categories has occurred as the sector has grown. These factors have led to a strong competition in which customers are tougher to target and costs are challenging to control. There is a pressing need for organisations to acquire, procure, and stock with the utmost care in an industry that is prone to high waste, spoilage, and inventory issues. There has been a lot of reaction and even the demise of certain businesses in the F&B sector recently because of how much trash is created. When it comes to restaurants, most of them are scrambling to find a way to keep things afloat and avoid going under losses because of low customer satisfaction and attrition. This paper examines some of the many cost-cutting best practises that can help address these challenges, while also improving internal operations like the costs of maintaining a highly-trained workforce, finding the right high quality yet cost-effective suppliers, and tracking all purchases and performances.

An essential aspect of F&B strategy is implementing cost-cutting measures, which have helped a wide range of firms save money and improve their performance as well as reducing the amount of trash they produce.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on the subject has been reviewed in this section

- **Kala et al., (2014)** hotels in emerging economies must build successful competitive strategies in order to survive in a climate where stakeholders are expecting more from every firm. As a result, they need to concentrate on dependable and crucial performance indicators that are absolutely critical to the success of hotels and establish a complete performance measurement framework that fits the needs of the dynamic environment.
- **Min et al., (1996)** in the hotel industry, service quality is seen as a vital part of the hotel's survival. **Shi et al., (2007)** and **Han et al., (2009)** a client's level of satisfaction with a company's service is linked to the likelihood that the customer would return.
- For the purpose of gaining an advantage over the competition, cost management is all about using a variety of tools and techniques to generate knowledge about planning, decision-making, and control in the short and long term (**Horngren et al. (2003)**, **Hansen and Mowen (2000)**, **Hilton et al. (2000)**]. When **Shank and Govindarajan (1989; 1993)** developed SCM inside management accounting, they were looking for ways to exploit the cost data, which came from a variety of sources and was often inconsistent, to gain a competitive edge. A firm's strategic posture, its complete value chain, and all of the firm's cost drivers must be taken into account while conducting cost analysis and cost management (**Shank and Govindarajan, 1993**). For organisations, these challenges include their place in the industry value chain, the tasks they should do, and the possibility for cost reduction and value additions. Research in supply chain management (SCM) has delved further into the relationship between costs, customer value, and

the firm's ability to fulfil its profit potential during the past few years (**McNair et al., 2001**). As a result, Strategic Cost Management focuses on three techniques: Value Chain Analysis, Cost Driver Analysis, and Value Creation Analysis. These techniques were heavily researched in the past.

- In a recent study (**Cooper and Edgett, 1999**), F&B enterprises were suggested to use development process models to cut food prices. The possibility of success, as well as an advantage over competitors, is greatly increased by using this method. A centralized R&D and the use of pre-made products and identical dishes are both utilized to keep food prices down by many chain restaurants. At starred restaurants, which are supposed to provide new food goods, cutting-edge cooking styles, cutting-edge cooking equipment, and innovative practises to minimise food prices while preserving product quality, one would say they have started a "trickle down" effect (**Ottenbacher and Harrington, 2007**). According to **Kim and Gregoire (2011)**, positive relationship management with vendors and suppliers has the potential to lower the overall food cost of restaurant operations.
- Food cost management and reduction strategies must be consistent with the goal of keeping customers. **Kotelikov (2008)** stated that, a 2% improvement in retention of customer has the similar outcome on profitability as a 10% cost reduction. This shows that, while cost control is still important, client retention cannot be overlooked. Due to market saturation and the effects of the global economic slump on profitability, budget restaurants have faced fierce competition in recent years. With narrower profit margins and more competition, a budget restaurant's performance hinges on its ability to retain customers by improving customer value or providing novel service options (**Reichheld and Sasser, 1990; Lovelock and Wright, 2002**).
- **Mhamdia and Ghadhab (2012)** use a value management and activity based costing model to present a holistic approach to the challenge of managing food costs. Staff training and the discovery of solutions aimed at reducing consumption have been identified as critical tools in lowering expenses without diluting "value," with the goal of increasing customer retention. The approach provides a unique perspective by combining consumption levels, costs, operational profit contribution, and customer satisfaction, but its application remains difficult. Repeat business, which demonstrates strong total customer retention, is frequently the backbone of successful restaurant enterprises. The most important factor influencing consumers' decisions to return to a restaurant is food quality, followed by service quality, meal pricing or value, and establishment location or atmosphere (**Soriano, 2002**). **Gupta et al. (2007)** agree, stating unambiguously that a consistent focus on food quality is needed for customer retention.
- **Dani and Rawal (2019)** in their paper titled "Impact of new Innovations in Food and Beverage Service Industry", had studied that "Food & beverage service sector is considered one of the

major fields which bring quite a great deal of profit and satisfying the tourist. Food and beverage service operations are continuing to improve and develop, together with progresses in quality. The tourism industry depends on good quality of food and beverages service because most of the tourist spend more than 25% (Outlook June 2012, Emerging Trends in Food & Beverage Services Retailing in India) of their expenses on same. In current scenario people don't like regular service style for food and beverage but they want some innovation which can be entertaining, attractive and presentable even physical environment which include service staff, ambience, table setting and lighting is also very important to attract the guests. Service quality plays a very important position to make the customers cheerful and insists them to revisit the restaurant. The food and beverage industry is subject to numerous trends and these trends have an impact on restaurant business success or failure”.

- **Mor, Bhardwaj and Singh (2018)** in their paper titled “A Structured literature review of the supply chain practices in Food Processing Industry”, reported upon the Food Supply Chain (FSC) practices. Authors selected the relevant literature of the food processing industry with reference to supply chain subjects such as performance analysis, food safety, logistics and transportation practices, traceability, information system and decision-making strategies. Their findings show that the higher competence in FSC can be achieved through food safety and security, high product quality, on-time delivery of products and better order-fill-rate.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- (i) To determine the importance of cost reduction strategy in the F&B industry.
- (ii) To study the impact of cost reduction strategies in the profit making small and medium sized restaurants in Uttarakhand.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research area is Uttarakhand with the focus being on restaurants that catered to religious tourism (Haridwar and Rishikesh), sightseeing (Mussoorie, Dehradun) and also education tourism (Roorkee) along with which cater to local people of the state. The researcher conducted a survey including on certain restaurants to obtain data on the strategic management initiatives taken up by restaurant owners. The tool of investigation used was the interviews guide to conduct in-dept and key person interviews. The qualitative research form has been utilized.

For the state of Uttarakhand, Kumaun and Garhwal are two distinct areas. The state's 13 districts have been further divided into sub-districts and development blocks, which are further subdivided.

Map 1: Uttarakhand Map

Source: Uttarakhand Map- Download Free Map of Uttarakhand In Pdf – Infoandopinion

A total of 2.8 lakh people has been employed by the state's industrial sector in Uttarakhand, however the majority of this expansion has been restricted to the state's plains. Agriculture, and notably mountain agriculture, provides a living for more than three-fourths of Uttarakhand's inhabitants. With regard to geography and environmental constraints, the use of contemporary input-intensive agriculture in mountainous locations is restricted. As a tourist destination, Uttarakhand's hill districts have a lot to offer. The abundance of natural resources makes the state an appealing investment location, particularly for tourism, agriculture, and forest-based companies.

The "Tourist Development Board" of Uttarakhand is the first of its kind in the nation. Besides that, it was the first state to be referred to as an "Organic State". Northern India's Uttarakhand State was once known as Uttaranchal. Due to the abundance of holy Hindu temples and towns scattered across Uttarakhand, it is known as the "Land of the Gods" with good reason. Some of these sites are among the most auspicious and spiritual in Hinduism. Himalayan and neighboring north-western districts of Uttar Pradesh were divided into the state on 9 November 2000, making it the 27th State of the Republic of India. The area is known for its natural splendor and prosperity. Among the top ten most popular

Indian tourist destinations is the lone mountainous state, Uttarakhand. Tourists from all over the world have flocked to the state.

Tourism is a substantial source of income for the inhabitants of Uttarakhand, according to the available statistics. The state's Ministry of Tourism is in charge of promoting and preserving the state's tourism industry and ensuring its financial viability. Plans for enhancing tourist earnings are also the responsibility of Uttarakhand's tourism ministry.

V. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Food and Beverage (F&B) industry has high turnover rates making a balanced and constant supply-demand equation a total necessity. The inability of a restaurant to maintain this required balance provokes the businesses to suffer significant losses, high amounts of wastage and unnecessary costs. There are several factors that add to the profitability of a restaurant concern of the F&B industry.

According to in-depth interviews with senior F&B unit personnel, a number of relevant insights were gleaned from the data. According to one of the restaurant's managers, inventory management is a time-consuming and costly part of the whole procurement and sourcing process in the food and beverage sector. Because of this, firms frequently fail to see the positive effects of these procedures, which cumulatively have a significant negative impact on the company. The restaurant industry is plagued by poor inventory management. We must predict demand, use procurement market knowledge, and have an awareness of the demands of our target customers in order to continue operating at a high level (Restaurant owner, Haridwar). Only a few companies are able to prevent overstocking, shortages, and waste today. Because of "the astronomically high frequency of perishable items in this business," another stakeholder believes that a lack of inventory management is a major source of loss in this industry. Every aspect of inventory management, from tracking to oversight to regulation, must be monitored by procurement professionals on a regular basis. (Restaurant owner is the past Mussourie for 20 years). Inventory management in itself helps keep the cost under control as there is less wastage of the food. It is an important part of the cost reduction strategies being followed by restaurant owners. This cost reduction technique helps in increasing profit margins.

“This industry is very unpredictable. There is a very high volume of perishables in this industry. The food and beverage wastage are a huge source of wasted investment and purchases, we are constantly on the run to make a variety of adjustments along the supply chain to mitigate the risks. This calls for constant monitoring and challenges including having good relation with suppliers” (Restaurant Managers in Haridwar). Having a good relation with suppliers and vendors help the procurement of goods faster and the restaurants don't need to store much inventory. As the inventory in this industry is mostly perishable, faster procurement and lesser amount of storage helps keep the cost of production under control.

As a result, leaders in the restaurant industry have taken steps to ensure that fresh produce is obtained from the best suppliers, that all food items are handled and packaged in a hygienic manner, that temperature-controlled transportation is used, and that clear instructions are provided for handling and storage in addition to packaging. These steps have been taken. To prevent overstocking, all restaurants must exercise extreme care due to the vastness of the inventory. There is always a risk of perishable deterioration, which has a significant influence on lost space, money, and food waste. “Taken together, these approaches may aid businesses in their attempts to reduce costs and greatly assure that they can sustainably develop (Parbhat Kumar, Trainee Manager in a restaurant in Rishikesh)”.

In the F&B sector, many of the tourist-oriented F&B establishments are particularly concerned with quality, cleanliness, pricing, lead time, delivery time, and coordination. It was indicated that one of the most significant methods to maintain operational efficiency was by decreasing expenses is finding the best match among suppliers for long-term relationships, “said Pramod Kumar, procurement manager of a restaurant in Dehradun. The professional restaurateurs utilise their strategic abilities to evaluate possible suppliers' raw material sources, pricing and expenses, sanitation and quality and the capacity to interact with procurement teams as well as manage purchase orders and delivery timeframes, to provide another answer to his argument”. Minimizing waste is critical in all of these situations as it helps in minimizing cost and maximizing profit margins (Ajay Chauhan, Procurement Manager).

Therefore, it has been proven that it is the right suppliers who can provide high-quality products, assure hygienic handling, offer competitive prices, mitigate most forms of supply chain and industry risks, and help cost reduction efforts. “It is only with the reduced levels of wastage, faster delivery times, lower chances of delays and risks and the presence of consistent communication that most of the restaurants can achieve significant success that would be challenging with inefficient and slow suppliers.” (Restaurant Manger, Almorah).

A company's whole supply chain must be evaluated and audited on a regular basis since the F&B business is so diverse, fast developing, and high-risk. Supplier performance and compliance, procurement, sourcing, inventory management, logistics and transportation, and other necessary staff are all included in this category. In the supply chain, all departments have a stake in maintaining cleanliness, eliminating waste, decreasing wasteful spending, and continuously upgrading procedures and systems in order to foster development. “As companies grow, the quality of their products, services, systems and processes should rise. With continuous audits and reviews, businesses can detect and mitigate potential risks, address problems preemptively, identify cost reduction opportunities and ensure that all organizational benchmarks are being met. However, where is the time. Before the Covid-19 induced lockdown we were having a rush of footfall but after that for almost two years now things have not normalized. Earlier we had no time to strategize. Now we have all the time but what do we strategize for? It has been a crippling blow for the F & B industry here” (Dev Karan Bhanot, Restaurant owner at Mussourie).

There is a very high volume of purchasing, producing, stocking and distributing which is taking place within the F & B industry. In normal times it is hard to keep pace with and many a times the companies have been known to often incur unnecessary expenses. This makes them face significant yet unnecessary losses. “These are some of the challenges that could be easily mitigated with strategically thought out and implemented action but as they are being faced on a day to day basis they tend to join the entire work process. Tracking all purchases, deals, deliveries, stock, distributions and other such purchases, can help improve the situation. Currently there should be transparency with stakeholders ensured inter-departmental and directed coordination” (Seva Ram, Manager, Resturant, Haldwani). This would further mitigate the probability of over-ordering or repeat orders and stop several forms of additional costs. “If all the restaurants continuously track their activities and the person responsible for supply chain management must efficiently oversee these activities. The chances of there being a number of unnecessary risks or challenges must be mitigated” (Restaurant Manager, Nainital). Therefore, the supply chain management can efficiently identify cost reduction opportunities, identify problems and inefficiencies, reduce unnecessary expenses, and improve overall operational efficiency substantially. A good supply chain can only be ensured if the restaurants are keeping a good relation with their vendors.

“Then biggest problem we are facing since before the pandemic is the high rate of attrition. There is vast gap. The F&B industry requires well-trained, properly supervised, and diligent employees to minimize risks and damage. The human resource requirements training especially in terms of hygiene, dealing with spoilage, pests, or over-stocking, coordinating purchase orders is an area requiring urgent attention. It requires efficiently training the staff for minimizing unnecessary losses, and identifying potential risks or challenges across all aspects of the restaurant” (Shivram, Procurement Manager, Haridwar). It's far more difficult to waste money on unneeded purchases, food spoilage or potentially loose customers due to low satisfaction level when employees are well-trained and conscientious. Supply chain managers and procurement officials may benefit from these improvements in order to better collaborate with their staff. Employee training always helps to keep the cost minimal. Also, as the employees are trained their loyalty towards the restaurant increases and also team bonding increases. This helps in lower the attrition rate, in turn reducing the cost. These cost reduction techniques should not be overlooked by the managers and owners as in the long run they help increase the profitability.

A continuous monitoring of direct and indirect cost has also been an important part of cost reduction techniques being used in the restaurant. The restaurant try to keep the food cost as low as possible. This also helps in keeping the pricing of the goods competitive according to the market, hence attracting more cutomers.

A continuing need exists to uncover more cost-cutting measures, make feasible and active changes based on the demands of the workforce, and increase overall efficiency through fostering open dialogue. As a result, a series of training sessions and seminars is required to address this continual need for cost reduction strategies.

Current Perspective

Several restaurant owners in Uttarakhand had been disturbed by the rise of digitization which has transformed many industries, including the F&B industry. With increasing automation, smart factories, IoT, and AI systems, the possibility of errors has been consequently reduced. “The world has changed so fast in this decade. We have had to adopt and adapt ourselves to the newer technologies of automated ordering, tracking orders and having short term and long term availability of data. No doubt all these analytics are necessary and have helped managers and stakeholders make better, data-driven decisions. The advent of technology has minimized the risk of hygiene challenges, provided more opportunities for skilled labor, helped us make productive one-time investments, and made inter-departmental coordination less challenging. In fact, many of us feel that with the right technology in place, there has been a much-reduced margin of error leaving us with much more time to focus on major operational decision” (Ram Bhanraj, Restaurant Manager, Dehradun). Thus, many of the companies have been successful in further cost-reduction attempts, mitigating risks and staying several steps ahead of their competitors at all times. A renowned food retailer and fast-food chain owner, Roorkee, said “the industry had witnessed a decline in the overall savings and a measurable rise in costs during the covid time though the demand had steadily increased over the previous quarters of the past financial years.’

VI. CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

In order to discover the problem, the restaurant owners often examined their inventory, procurement and sourcing departments and were frequently met with significant quantities of waste, over-stocking, spoiling and excessive costs and under trained staff in their efforts to find the problem.

When faced with this dilemma, the only option was to use strategy effectively so that their restaurants and F&B Outlets could apply cost reduction solutions by reducing many of these concerns and recouping savings while still supplying and serving high-quality goods and services. For the sake of reducing waste, lowering costs, and raising overall performance, the food merchants tried to apply effective cost-cutting strategies. Restaurant owners have been split on whether or not to use smart technology in their businesses when it comes to deploying these solutions. It has been their primary goal to create a more sanitary, error-free, and well-documented system.

Several restaurant owners re-trained all personnel to better manage inventory, spoilage, and supply chain difficulties, while embracing comments, recommendations, and modifications made by them, offering a greater understanding of the groundwork and issues. As the restaurant's proprietors began to recognize the importance of their valuable workforce, working conditions for the staff improved. Most towns in Uttarakhand have a food store that employs a supply chain manager and procurement manager to monitor all operations, increase efficiency, and uncover new cost-cutting options. It can be observed that with these modifications, restaurant owners were aiming for efficiency, substantial savings and major cost reduction, while maintaining high customer satisfaction rates, increasing their company's

profit margins and supplying high-quality goods. This is a critical factor in sustaining and all sorts of visitor inflow in Uttarakhand's tourism-intensive districts. When it comes to increasing client happiness, the key to doing so may lie in cutting expenses and providing high quality food and services in order to better serve them.

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