

## CASE STUDY 8

# TASTY BITE TURNED UNTASTY

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Subash, after going through an article about the good South Indian food at Southend was tempted to try it out with his family last Saturday. The contents of the coverage was too tempting and he would almost taste the food while going through the article. They all were looking forward to having dinner there.

Subhash tried to contact the manager on phone but couldn't reach him as the telephone was busy. So he could not book the table for his family.

He opted to drive out without any reservation and reached the area in which this restaurant was located. After great difficulty and enquiring from many people he reached the building in which the restaurant was located. He looked around for directions or signboards but could not find anything that could lead him to the restaurant. He looked for parking space but could not locate any. He found about 25 to 30 cars parked outside residential apartments. There was no authorised parking and no one from the restaurant was able to guide the cars.

After parking the car, they entered the building which was poorly lit. No signs were up to direct customers.

On enquiring from one of the visitors, they found out the entrance gate. It was difficult to enter the gate as many two wheelers were parked in front of this gate and they had to practically jump over a few to reach the steps leading to the restaurant.

The passage to the restaurant was through a stairway and more than 50 people were standing shoulder to shoulder and there was lot of push and pull on account of the to and fro movement of the people. Some young boys were in a hurry to get out and some young couples were standing in the middle of the corridor.

It looked like a scene from a movie interval. With great hesistance, Subash asked about the restaurant from one of the persons in the crowd and he was told to proceed straight and turn left.

He was relieved to see the board carrying the sign "Dining Hall" on a 12"x6" wooden plate. He was quite relieved and proceeded to the dining hall. Another surprise was in store for him when he was stopped by a restaurant boy Sundram who was compiling the waiting list.

Sundram was assigned the-job of registering the guests, locating empty tables and directing people to the dining table. The restaurant did not accept advance reservations.

Even the serial number of the waiting list was not adhered to. If a table for four was vacated, four guests were seated ignoring the groups who had been waiting for longer. The principle of first come first served basis was not followed. It was already 8 p.m. At this time it was too late to go somewhere else. So he registered himself and got the waiting slip. After getting the waiting slip Subash asked Sundram, how long they would be required to wait. If it is too long, they would prefer to try another South Indian restaurant a kilometer away. Sundram replied that compared to other restaurants in the vicinity, it should not take that long and they may have to wait not more than fifteen minutes.

During the waiting period Subash started talking to another guest, Ramesh standing next to him. Ramesh was a regular customer of this restaurant and told Subash that Southend is a South Indian restaurant most popular for south Indian Food. Being moderately priced it is very popular with people of middle income groups. In spite of long waits good food and its affordability is the factor arguing the people to wait around standing in the open. Still no waiting area is available for the customers. An open space and staircase near the restaurant serves as the waiting area. In the rainy season there is no shelter and people take shelter under the stairways. In the summer people use their own umbrellas or trees in the courtyard of the building in which this restaurant is located.

Parking is a problem here. If you are first timer, it will take ten minutes from the parking to the restaurant gate. There is no authorised parking. You have to create parking space for yourself and then ask at least twice or thrice about the location and direction to reach the place.

This place is poorly lit and occasionally people are found slipping on the stairs. The toilets are located about fifty yards from the restaurant and to find them you must enquire from the waiter inside or a person assigned at the gate who register your name for the waiting slips. He enquires about the number of people accompanying the guest. As soon as a table gets vacated, he announces the guest's by shouting at the top of his voice and gestures them with his hand. He always looks in a hurry. People who are waiting for the turn, make repeat enquiries from him. He is always answering the enquiries of many customers simultaneously. His poor knowledge of the local language and English creates confusion among the customers. Half of them do not understand and some of them misunderstand.

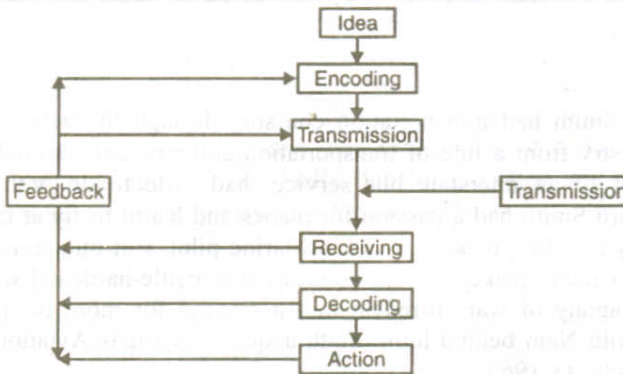
Southend has good public relations. Many times, favourable articles have appeared in the supplements of national dailies of repute having very large circulations.

Subash and his family was eagerly waiting for their call but even after half an hour their name was not announced. They were getting anxious and restless and felt they have made a wrong decision. It was only after one hour that they were seated inside the dining hall. By this time everybody had lost their patience, and tempers were high.

Subash ordered the food. It was undoubtedly tasty. They had their fill. To express their anger of a long wait and unorganised customer handling they paid the bill but did not leave any tip. Tips from the customer was the yardstick for measuring the restaurant's performance and this matter was reported by the waiter to the restaurant manager. The manager called Sundram to find out the details about this transaction.

*Questions for Discussion*

1. Critically examine the service delivery system?
2. What is the relevance of physical evidence, process and people in the service offering? Comment on the above three elements in the context of the above episode.
3. How do customer relate to waiting in the service offerings. Discuss strategies adopted in this case and how can you improve them if desired.
4. Examine the following communication model and identify what went wrong?



5. What communication mistakes were made in creating the problem?
6. What should Subash have done to prevent the situation?
7. What should Sundram have done to prevent the situation?
8. If you are the owner of the restaurant what steps would you initiate to improve service delivery?

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