

Exploring the Importance of Senses in the Creation of a Holistic Customer Experience and Behavior

Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration in

Tourism and Hospitality Management

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Affidavit

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

The thesis was not submitted in the same or in a substantially similar version, not even partially, to another examination board and was not published elsewhere.

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the theory that nowadays customers expect more from a service encounter than just the functional service and the product. Thus, the aim of this study is to explore the importance of senses in relation to service experiences. The study will first examine existing literature to build a theoretical basis for the following empirical research. In order to thoroughly answer all research questions, both quantitative and qualitative research methods will be applied. The research will be based on a set of online reviews about various restaurants in Vienna. The findings of the conducted research support the theory that the implication of multiple senses can have a great impact on the overall perceived quality of a service encounter. Thus, this thesis could be seen as a motivation for service providers to reduce disturbing sensual impressions and implement pleasant sensations to their service environment.

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1 Introduction

Over the past years a strong growth in the service economy has been widely recognized and many services, especially in the tourism sector play an important part in the development of nations' economies (Gilmore, 2003, p.3). There is a great diversity of services. This ranges from pure services, which by definition only consist of intangible elements (Schneider & White, 2004, p.4), to service businesses. The latter offer both intangible service elements as well as tangible products (Gilmore, 2003, p.4). For example in the case of a restaurant the perceived value of the core element, the food served, is strongly influenced by the intangible service that accompanies it.

Due to the constantly rising consumer expectations and power service providers need to recognize that delivering high service quality is crucial for success. The reason for this is that based on the theory of Zeithaml et al (2006, p.116) service quality can become a dominant factor of customers' evaluation. In order to be able to deliver a constantly high level of service quality it is important to understand its meaning and how to measure it. Parasuraman et al (1985) defined service quality as the difference between pre-consumption customer expectations and the perception of the service that is actually delivered. Therefore, the ultimate goal should be to fill this so-called customer-gap. By doing so the perceived service quality is likely to rise and in turn increase the customers' satisfaction.

A widely recognized method to measure the level of service quality is the so-called SERVQUAL model, which was suggested by the three researchers Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (Verma, 2008, p.297). This method is based on the theory that customers judge quality based on multiple factors (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p.116). Thus, SERVQUAL measures the discrepancy between customers' expectations and actual perceived service outcomes based on five dimensions – responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy and tangibles. The result of the calculated equation can then be expressed in three levels of quality: satisfying, good and poor.

Although SERVQUAL does consider both tangible and intangible components of service it disregards some other important intangible factors such as environment and atmosphere. Hence, some firms have started to implement a more holistic

service method, namely customer experience management. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998) goods and services are no longer enough. Rather, another element the so-called experience should be seen as a distinct economic offering which can add important competitive value. Haecckel et al (2003) suggest that based on the theory that customers do not only require functional but more importantly emotional clues in a service delivery, providers should focus on atmospheric stimuli and create a so-called total customer experience. The benefit of this method is that it builds a strong customer relationship and therefore creates a unique competitive advantage.

Haecckel et al (2003, p.21) further state, that managing customers' experiences requires awareness of all of their senses throughout the experience. According to the researchers the five human senses are a direct connection to the customers' emotions. Therefore, implementing sound, smell, sight, taste and touch is crucial for managing a positive emotional experience. Lindstrom (2005) states, that nearly the whole understanding of the world is experienced through our senses. Therefore, the more senses an experience engages the more pleasant and memorable it can be (Pine& Gilmore, 1998, p.104). Thinking for example of a restaurant experience, a well-prepared and delicious meal in a noisy environment with dull smoky air sitting on uncomfortable chairs could be perceived very negatively although the quality of the dish itself was good. Whereas the same meal consumed in a relaxing and comfortable surrounding could be perceived and rated totally different.

According to Isacsson et al (2009) there has been quite some research on the effect of specific individual senses on service experiences. For example scents are closely related to memory, sounds can influence customers' moods, and sight strongly influences customers' behavior. However, there has been only little research conducted on the effect of multiple senses. Lindstrom (2005, p.142) found that senses are even more effective when they are being combined with each other. Thus, according to this theory, the sense of sight, which is claimed to be the most prevailing one, can be greatly enhanced when it is connected with for example pleasant matching sounds or scents.

1.1 Background information

This thesis builds on the theory that service encounters are influenced by the existence of multiple sensual experiences (Lindstrom, 2005; Hultén, 2009). According to Isacsson et al (2009) so far only a few studies about multisensory experiences and their impact on service exist, especially related to the tourism and hospitality sector. Due to the fact that customers are becoming increasingly demanding and competition is constantly growing, companies are seeking methods to add value to their offer and develop a unique competitive advantage (Hultén et al, 2009). As suggested by Lindstrom (2005) the implication of sensory experiences can create exactly such value. Therefore, one purpose of this study is to further raise the awareness of the importance of multiple senses and thus could stimulate further research in this field.

Furthermore, because until now only a few firms have started to apply more holistic views towards service provision (Haeckel et al, 2003) another aim of this study is to help service providers to understand the importance, effect and benefit of implementing multisensory experiences into their service environment. Thus, this paper aims to explore the importance of senses in a service environment.

1.2 Research objectives

This thesis examines the impact of the five human senses on the overall rating of satisfaction. The study will be based on online reviews from international guest about various restaurants in Vienna. The objective of this thesis will be to answer the following two main research questions. This will require previously clarifying a set of sub questions, which will be answered by analyzing a range of existing literature.

Main research questions:

1. In which way do senses impact service experiences?
2. How are sense related to satisfaction?

Sub questions:

1. What is service quality and how can it be increased?
2. What makes service experiences satisfactory?
3. What are senses and how are they related to services?

This paper is going to be divided into two main parts – a comprise literature review and the summary of the research conducted. The literature part will consist of three main streams. First a description of service will be given, followed by a suggestion of a widely renowned method to measure service quality. Then an enhancement to service quality, namely customer experience management will be discussed. Finally the theory of adding senses to a service experience will be examined. The literature review will be followed by an introduction of the methodology used for conducting the quantitative and qualitative research. Then the outcome of the studies will be presented. In the end the findings will be stated and a conclusion will be drawn.

2 Literature review

2.1 Service quality

In order to go into detail about service quality it is important to first briefly examine the general concept of services. Therefore, the following passage will briefly define services and give an overview of their unique characteristics.

2.1.1 Service

According to Gilmore (2003, p.3) services are to be found everywhere around people's everyday-life. Due to the great diversity of services it has been difficult to find a universe definition for the term. However, Gilmore (2003, p.4) states that services in most cases are described as an act, a process and a performance. According to that researcher services are economic activities that create 'added value' and provide benefits for customers. Another important characteristic about services is that they are necessarily intangible in nature, but for the creation of such it may possibly require the use of tangible goods (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Thus, services are a mixture of tangible and intangible aspects. A theory that is often used to illustrate that mix of service elements is the so-called flower of service. The graph that is shown in Figure 1 depicts that the core element of a service encounter is surrounded by supplementary aspects. In the case of a restaurant the core element is a tangible good, namely the food served. On the other hand the supplementary components are mainly intangible.

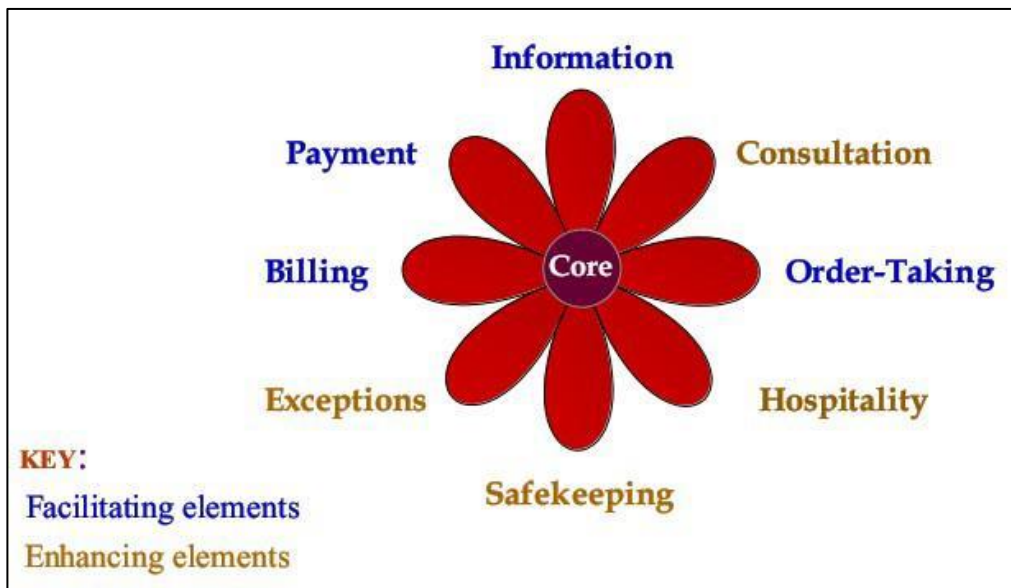


Figure 1: Flower of Service (Lovelock et al, 2009)

Furthermore, it is important to mention that it can be differentiated between various types of services. These are for example customer services, service 'products' or service companies (Gilmore, 2003, p. 4). However, as this project deals with the examination of restaurant experiences, the so-called service businesses are most relevant. This is because "such businesses include those that provide an almost entirely intangible offering, such as legal services, healthcare, and cleaning services and businesses that offer both services and products such as restaurants and retail" (Gilmore, 2003, p. 4). This means that in such a business the perceived value of a product - in the context of a restaurant, e.g. the food served – is highly influenced by the service that accompanies it, as described by the flower of service. Seeing it from the view of Schneider and White (2004, p. 6), a restaurant visit is not a "pure service". This is because based on the theory of those authors pure services do not involve any tangible component.

The fact that service businesses are mostly intangible, inseparable, and inconsistent leads to a managerial challenge. There is a high chance of variability involved (Verma, 2008, p. 41; Zeithaml et al, 2006, p. 24). For a successful service business it is important to handle the quality of its delivery on a constant level, therefore the next passage will give an insight into the definition of service quality. This will be followed by the suggestion of how to measure service quality.

2.1.2 Defining service quality

There have been a lot of discussions on how to define quality. According to Verma (2008, p. 279) the reason for this is based on the difficulty to clarify what quality actually is. An explanation for this problem lies within the fact that it is conditioned by such imprecise subjective factors like “perception, expectations and experiences of customers and provider” (Brown et al, 1991). Although there are numerous viewpoints from which quality can be looked at, one of the widest accepted definitions in terms of services states that quality can be described as “the discrepancy between customer expectation and perceptions of what is delivered” (Parasuraman et al, 1988). Looking closer at this definition, Zeithaml et al (2006, p33-34) explain, that “customer expectations are standards or reference points that customers bring into the service experience, whereas customer perceptions are subjective assessments of actual service experiences”.

2.1.3 Gap model

A model that conceptualizes the definition above is the so-called ‘gaps model of service quality’, developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985). This model views the quality perception of customers as the gap between the desired service that had been expected and the service that was actually provided (Verma, 2008, p.287). Figure 2 illustrates the model based on an example of a fast food restaurant.

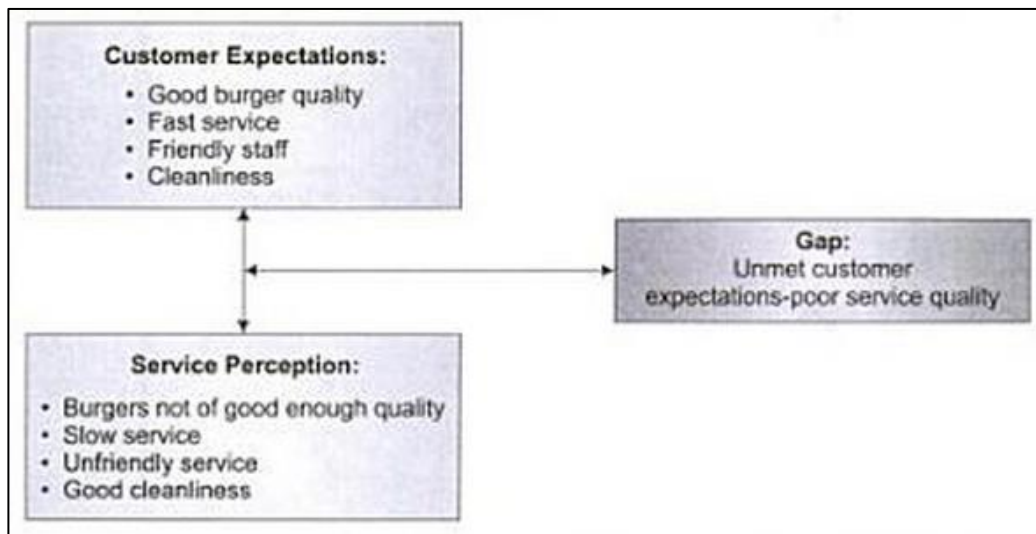


Figure 2: Customer Gap (Verma, 2008, p.296)

The gaps model of service quality can also be called the ‘customer gap’, as it represents the external customer side of the total gap model. It is the last of five gaps of the full gaps model of quality. According to Zeithaml et al (2006, p. 34) the customer gap forms the basis for the full gap model because closing that gap is essential for being able to deliver quality service.

The first four gaps of the full gaps model are found on the provider side. The presence of any discrepancies within the internal organization of the service provider leads to the impossibility to deliver high service quality to the customer. Therefore, the goal must be to fill the four so-called ‘provider gaps’ in order to be able to deliver consistently high service quality (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p. 34). This relationship between the customer and the provider sides is being illustrated in Figure 3.

This paper concentrates mainly on understanding the customer’s expectations, which are depicted in the darker top section of Figure 3. Therefore, the four provider gaps, in the lighter colored bottom section of the graph, which analyze the internal organizational discrepancies, are only going to be named and defined briefly.

Gap 1: 'management perception gap' – not knowing what customers expect

Gap 2: 'service quality specification gap' – not selecting the right service designs and standards

Gap 3: 'service delivery gap' – not delivering to service designs and standards

Gap 4: 'external communication gap' – not matching performance to promises

(Zeithaml et al, 2006,p.35; Kasper et al, 2006, p.192)

As can be seen in Figure 3 the gaps on the provider side as well as the customer gap are interrelated and connected. Therefore, the existence of only one of these internal gaps impedes the possibility of closing the last gap, the customer gap. This implies that service providers have to fully understand the expectation of the customer to successfully function internally and in turn close the last gap on the customer side.

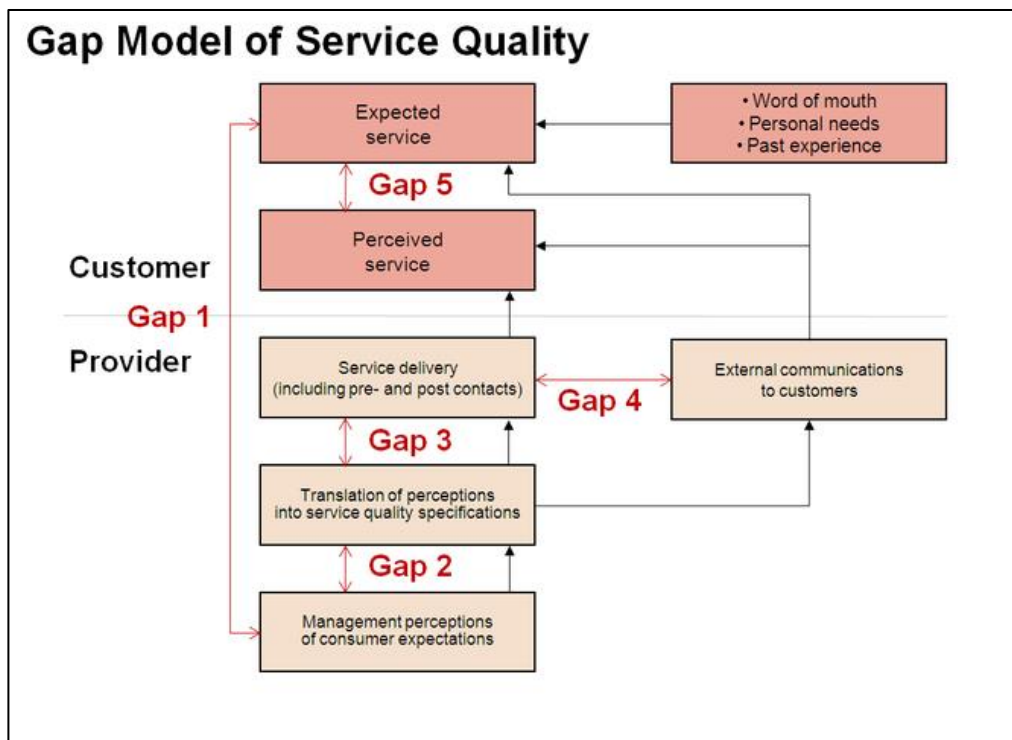


Figure 3: Gap Model of Service Quality (Parasuraman et al, 1985)

The gaps model of service quality was designed as a basis of understanding for service businesses which desire to improve their service quality. However, in order to be able to enhance it, first the current situation has to be analyzed. Therefore, in

the following passage, after a brief general introduction, a widely recognized method which uses the theory of the gaps model to measure service quality will be explained.

2.1.4 Measuring service quality – SERVQUAL

Measuring quality of services is usually more difficult and complex than of goods. The reason for this is mainly the high intangibility of services. As goods are tangible physical objects, their quality can be measured based on comparison with actual specifications and set standards. So for example the quality of a good can be precisely measured by the accuracy of its weight or length compared to a model (Verma, 2008, p.297). This means that the quality of goods can be well measured objectively, whereas in contrast the quality of services has to rely on subjective decisions. For example managers of restaurants may get the feedback from a customer that the service at their visit was 'excellent'. However, this description can only be of little managerial value, as the level of perceived excellence can differ from one person to another, based on for example prior experiences or life styles. According to Verma (2008, p. 297) "something that is not measurable in precise quantitative terms cannot be managed and controlled". Therefore, a method was needed that could measure the quality in a more scientific way. The most acknowledged method to measure service quality was first suggested in 1985 and developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry in 1988. The so-called SERVQUAL model suggests that consumers base their perception of quality on comparison between their expectations about the service and the actual delivered service. In other words the model suggests that quality is equal to the gap between customer expectations and perception (Verma, 2008, p. 297). Therefore, according to Mudie and Pirrie (2006, p. 92), it could be said that the fifth gap in the gap model of service quality was initiating SERVQUAL.

It is important to recognize that before something can be measured, first the factors that should actually be included in the measurement have to be identified. The SERVQUAL model builds on the research that customers do not judge quality based on one dimension only, but rather in a multidimensional manner (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p.116). In the following passage the five dimensions of service quality will be explained.

Dimensions of service quality

Through qualitative interviews, exploratory and quantitative research Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry defined five dimensions with “which consumers organize information about service quality in their minds” (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p.117; Kasper et al, 2006, p.189). These are:

1. Tangibles: Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel
2. Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
3. Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service
4. Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence
5. Empathy: Caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers

(Parasuraman et al, 1988)

In order to better understand the five dimensions of SERVQUAL the following passage will further explain each of them.

Tangibles

Tangibles are representing the physical appearance of the service provider. They include the facilities, equipment and personnel. An important part of this dimension is the cleanliness of the premises. Furthermore, this dimension involves the possible judgement of the condition of communication tools, such as telephones or computers (Kasper et al, 2006, p. 189). According to Zeithaml et al (2006, p. 120) especially in the hospitality industry this dimension is of high importance. This is because for example in a restaurant customers are personally present in the premises to receive the service. Service businesses can well improve the image of their service by including tangibles in their strategy. However, customers could also perceive the total service badly because of a bad appearance of the service location.

Reliability

Reliability means that firms should hold what they promised - for example about keeping schedules of delivery, prices or service outcomes.

Often, among the five dimensions of service quality reliability is extremely important to customers (Mudie & Pirrie, 2006, p.92). Especially in settings such as restaurants guests must be able to rely on the providers because their well-being can get affected by the quality of service. Thus, service providers should really understand their customers' expectations (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p.117).

Responsiveness

As this dimension represents the willingness to help customers, it also involves the ability to flexibly customize the service specifically to customers' needs. Responsiveness is furthermore judged based on the attentiveness and promptness that is given to customer requests, questions, complaints, and problems (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p. 117). A restaurant for example could fail directly in this dimension if a guest entered the venue and had to wait for assistance or service for too long. Another critical situation could be when a customer sent an email with a reservation request and did not get a response.

Assurance

This dimension involves the competence and knowledge of the employees. In most service cases the employees are the direct connection to the firm. Thus, they represent and make up the image of a company and its service delivery. Therefore, staff trainings about the service processes can support the assurance of service quality (Kasper et al, 2006, p. 189).

The assurance dimension also includes the ability of a service provider to convey security and trust. Therefore, this dimension is mostly important to customers of services that have a high risk potential, such as banks, legal services or insurances (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p.119).

Empathy

The dimension of empathy includes the amount of care that a service provider shows towards its customers. Empathy means that a firm should make each customer feel as if he/she was unique and provide customized and personalized service, specifically tailored to individual's needs. The reason for this is that customers want to feel their problems or needs being understood (Zeithaml et al, 2006, p.120).

2.1.5 Calculating SERVQUAL

The SERVQUAL method uses the five above mentioned dimensions to measure the total service quality. There are 22 questions which are distributed among the five dimensions. An example of this 22 items SERVQUAL questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1: 22 items of the SERVQUAL questionnaire. The items are to be answered by a 7 point Likert scale, depending on the level of agreement with the statement.

Like already stated earlier quality is calculated as the difference between a customer's expectations and perception. Therefore, people surveyed are asked to fill out two sets of the 22 questions. The first is to be answered in regard of an excellent example of a service business, e.g. a great restaurant. This represents the customer's expectations. The other one is dealing with the actual service provider which was used. Therefore, this set displays the customer's perception. By comparing the results of the two sets the difference and therefore the service quality can be measured (Kasper et al, 2006, pp. 190-91). Figure 4 depicts the formula used by SERVQUAL. In this formula Q stands for the resulting perceived service quality, and P and E for the ratings of the perception and expectations, respectively (Parasuraman et al, 1988, p.19).

$$Q = P - E$$

Figure 4: SERVQUAL Equation (Parasuraman et al, 1988, p.19)

According to Verma (2008, p.297) the results of such a measurement, namely the perceived quality of services can be grouped into three levels:

1. Very good, delighting
2. Satisfactory
3. Poor

Service quality can be defined as satisfactory when the service provided is equal to the expectations. In the case that the service provided did not meet the expectations a situation of disconfirmation occurs. On the one hand, this disconfirmation can be in a positive way, when the service delivery exceeds the expected. Then the service quality is perceived to be good. On the other hand, the disconfirmation can be negative and result in poor perceived service quality. In that case the expectations were higher than the delivered outcome (Kasper et al, 2006, p105). An illustration of this concept can be found in Figure 5.

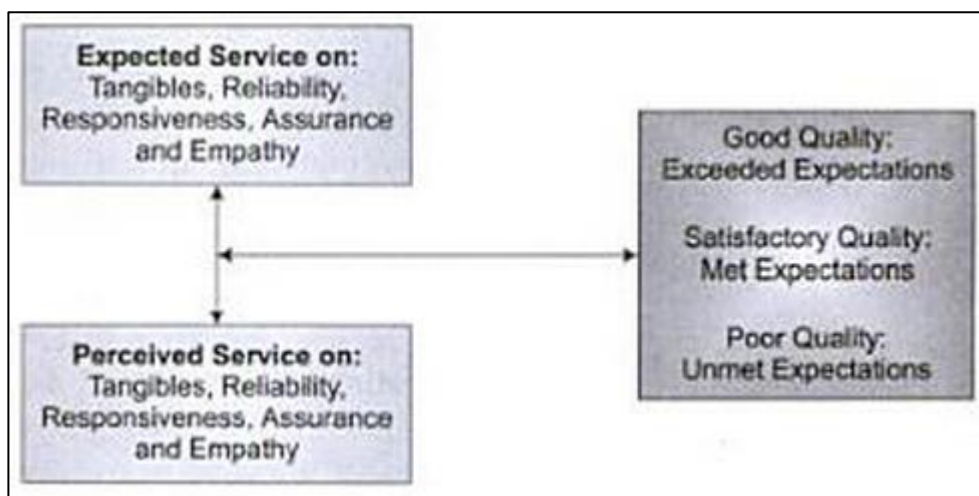


Figure 5: Three Quality States (Verma, 2008, p.297)

2.1.6 Service quality and satisfaction

Having dealt with such a user based quality assessment tool that examines the customer's confirmation or disconfirmation of expectations, it is important to consider the critical confusion between service quality and satisfaction (Kasper et al, 2006, p.181). Service providers are recommended to do so in order to be able to understand whether they should improve "their performance to satisfy customers or to deliver higher levels of service quality" (King Har, 2008, p.7).

According to Kasper et al (2006, p.181) “quality refers to some attribute of what is offered, provided, produced whereas satisfaction or dissatisfaction refers to a customer’s reaction to that offer”. Considering this service quality is in the hand of the service provider, whereas satisfaction is determined by the customer, as it is influenced by the subjective experience and prior feelings about the service.

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) furthermore found that “perceived service quality is a global judgment, or attitude, relating to the superiority of the service, whereas satisfaction is related to a specific transaction”. In that the two terms are related as satisfaction with several service encounters can develop a perceived service quality over time.

Kasper, Helsdingen and Gabbott (2006, p. 182) suggest that a person can have a perception of service quality of a service even without or before having actually experienced it. For example, somebody might perceive a Michelin star rewarded restaurant as of high quality, although never having visited it. In contrast to this satisfaction cannot be created by assumptions but rather has to be personally experienced. So following the Michelin star restaurant example, one can only be satisfied with the restaurant as soon as he/she has eaten there.

Looking at satisfaction, it has to be recognized however, that it may not only be derived from the service itself. Rather also other factors such as the environment of the service location, other customers or other incidents which are less controllable by the service provider might affect the perception of the service encounter (Kasper et al, 2006, p.182).

2.1.7 Application of SERVQUAL

The SERVQUAL method can be used for multiple purposes. It can not only determine the total service quality, but also the individual result for each dimension. Therefore, it can be used to detect areas in which managerial improvements are recommendable. SERVQUAL can moreover be used to compare specific service providers with their competitors or individual stores with other units from a multi-unit company (Parasuraman et al, 1989). Furthermore, it can be examined which of the five dimension is of highest importance to customers. Through this service

providers may alter their strategies and lay higher attention on a respective area (Kasper, 2006, p.190).

The SERVQUAL model of service quality has been a pioneering asset for many industries and has been widely used in service research. However, although the model does consider both the physical component included in service businesses and the intangible service itself, the method misses out on other intangible factors such as the environment and atmosphere. Researchers (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Haeckel et al., 2003) have found that some firms have started to head towards a more holistic service method, the so-called 'customer experience management'. As this method is said to create even higher customer satisfaction, the following section is going to define and describe this theory.

2.2 Customer experiences

The SERVQUAL model, as described above, measures service quality based on the intangible and tangible factors of products and services. However, the two researchers Pine and Gilmore (1998) argue that “good and services are no longer enough”. When looking at **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** it can be seen that around the factors that are measures by SERVQUAL there is another component that plays an important part in the overall quality perception – namely the experience. Pine and Gilmore (1999, p.ix) suggested that “experiences represent an existing but previously unarticulated genre of economic output”. According to them (Pine&Gilmore, 1998, p.97) experiences have since then usually been mixed together with service. However, “experiences are a distinct economic offering, as different from services as services are from goods”. The just named authors are widely renowned for their research and their work is going to be further discussed in the following passage.

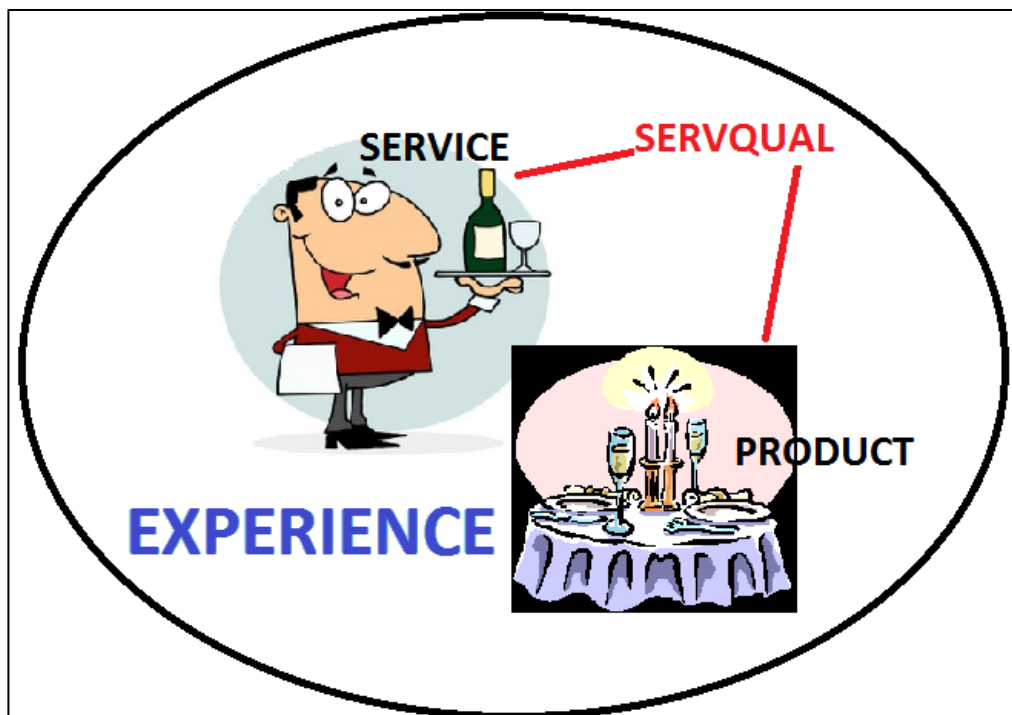


Figure 6: Service Experience

2.2.1 Experience economy

B. Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore published their book 'The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre & Every Business a Stage' for businesses which are looking for new methods to increase their venue's value (Pine& Gilmore, 1999, p. ix). According to their theory separating experiences from services creates an excellent opportunity for economic expansion. In other words this means "recognizing experiences as a distinct economic offering provides the key to future economic growth" (Pine& Gilmore, 1999, p. x).

To describe the new source of added value it can be considered that a person who pays for a service expects a certain series of intangibles performed for him, whereas a customer who buys an experience expects to be able "to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages – as in a theatrical play" (Pine& Gilmore, 1999, p. 2). Therefore, the two authors are comparing the delivery of an experience with a theatre, as companies stage an experience whenever they engage with customers. Experiences occur whenever a company uses the service as a stage and its goods as props. In that situation they have the chance to connect with their guests personally and in a memorable way (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p.3).

Why experience economy?

One might wonder why such a new economic offering is needed now. Pine and Gilmore came up with a couple of reasons that explain the emergence of the experience economy. A first reason lies within the rapid development of technology. This factor strongly encourages many experiences. Secondly the constantly growing competition in the market requires companies to come up with new methods to differentiate from others (Pine& Gilmore, 1999, p. 5). Based on the new theory companies can stage so many experiences which make their offerings more unique and memorable that therefore it is easier for them to outstand from competition. Another big cause for the climb of the experience economy is the rising wealth of the society. Pine and Gilmore found that this growing affluence can be detected in the increasing number of festive meals people have. This can be linked with the higher amount of money guests are willing to pay for enjoying a great experience (Pine& Gilmore, 1999, p.5). The most important driver for the experience economy,

according to Pine and Gilmore, in fact however is “the nature of the economic value and its natural progression” (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p.5). As this development plays an important role for the understanding of the experience economy, it is going to be further explained in the next section.

Economic progression

For the beginning it is important to know that the researchers Pine and Gilmore differentiated between four stages of economic offerings. These are commodities, goods, services and experiences. Based on their theory each offering varies from the others fundamentally and it successively grows in economic value (Pine& Gilmore, 1999, p.5).

Table 1 gives an overview of the differing characteristics of the four levels of economic offerings.

| <i>Economic offering</i> | <i>Commodities</i> | <i>Goods</i> | <i>Services</i> | <i>Experiences</i> |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Economy</i> | Agrarian | Industrial | Service | Experience |
| <i>Economic function</i> | Extract | Make | Deliver | Stage |
| <i>Nature of offering</i> | Fungible | Tangible | Intangible | Memorable |
| <i>Key attribute</i> | Natural | Standardized | Customized | Personal |
| <i>Method of supply</i> | Stored in bulk | Inventoried after production | Delivered on demand | Revealed over a duration |
| <i>Seller</i> | Trader | Manufacturer | provider | Stager |
| <i>Buyer</i> | Market | User | Client | Guest |
| <i>Factors of demand</i> | Characteristics | Features | Benefits | Sensation |

Table 1: Economic Distinctions (Pine& Gilmore, 1998, p.98)

What should be kept in mind is that commodities, goods and services are external to the buyer, whereas experiences require the personal participation of the consumer. Hence, they actually solely exist in the mind of the individual who has “engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level”. This means that each encounter is unique and “no two people can have the same experience, because each experience drives from the interaction between the staged event (like a theatrical play) and the individual’s state of mind” (Pine& Gilmore, 1998, p.99).

According to Pine and Gilmore the different economic offerings have evolved from each other. The two authors claimed to be able to explain the progression by a simple model, the so called ‘four stage evolution of the birthday cake’. Figure 7 helps to further illustrate this development. Thinking of the birthday cake, in the agrarian economy mothers would take the effort and bake a cake for their children from raw farm commodities, like sugar flour or eggs. Moving to the goods economy mothers were already willing to pay a bit more to use the help of branded manufacturers who produced premixed ingredients like cake mixes. As soon as in the service economy parents might have been so busy that they would not even want to bake the cake themselves anymore but pay much more to have a grocery store or bakery provide a finished birthday cakes customized for them. And finally in the experience economy parents are not only happy to have somebody bake the cake for them, but rather even ‘outsource’ the whole birthday party for the kids. They expect some company to stage a memorable performance (Pine& Gilmore, 1998, p 97).

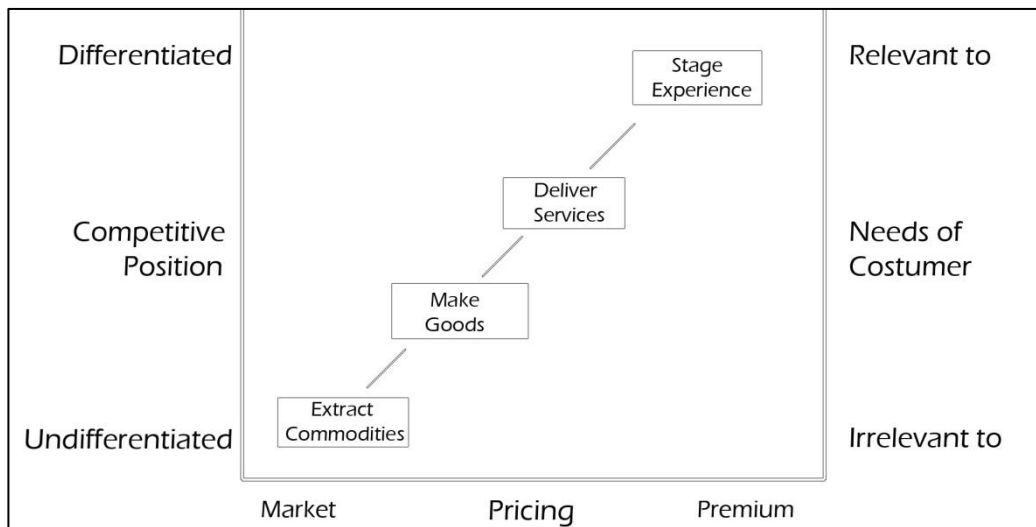


Figure 7: Progression of Economic Value (Pine& Gilmore 1999, p. 22)

In that case each offering increases its value as it is found to be more relevant to the buyer. The fact that companies stage so many different kinds of experiences leads to a great way of differentiation, which in turn allows companies to set a premium price based on the distinctive value that was created.

Haeckel, Carbone and Berry (2003, p.19) found that a growing number of organizations have begun to implement so-called customer experience management principles in order to make the most out of the new superior customer value. Those researchers came up with interesting theories which further include the importance of senses in a service encounter. Therefore, they are going to be examined in the next section.

2.2.2 Total customer experience

According to Haeckel et al the new holistic design and delivery of services create so called 'total customer experiences'. Those are defined as "the feelings customers take away from their interaction with the firm's goods, services and 'atmospheric' stimuli" (Haeckel et al, 2003, p.18). The researchers claim that companies which interact with customers actually always provide total experiences. However, to do so effectively it is important that businesses understand how to systematically manage them. For in fact if applied professionally, total customer experiences can result in strong and loyal customer preferences and therefore create a great and unique kind of competitive advantage. Another important motivation for implementing total

customer experience management is the fact that holistic experiences directly determine the perception of value, and thus the disposition of word-of-mouth and the intention of whether or not to consume the service again (Haeckel et al, 2003, p.20). Haeckel et al (2003, p.20) found that good customer experiences are not only composed of functional components but moreover should involve emotional benefits. The authors state that those factors can be realized through so-called 'clues', which will be described in the section below.

Clues

Based on the theory of Haeckel et al (2003, p.20) consumers perceive a variety of clues which they can filter both consciously and unconsciously into either rational or emotional impressions.

Clues can basically be defined as anything that one could see, feel, smell, taste or hear (Haeckel et al, 2003, p.20). Therefore, such clues are already closely related to the human senses. In a service encounter there are a variety of components that emit clues. All together they compose the total customer experience. The goal is to create an integrated set of clues which jointly meet or even exceed the customer's expectations. This would then be effective total customer experience management (Haeckel et al, 2003, p.20). Table 2 presents a list of components of a restaurant visit which all determine the perception of quality. In this case they are grouped into three categories – the product, service and the experience. On the one hand, the first two categories in the table represent the functional and rationally ratable parts. The 'product' stands for the physical condition and functioning of the goods and products in a restaurant. This includes for example whether the table is set correctly and with nice tableware and of course whether the food that is served actually is of appropriate quality. The 'service' includes the quality of service as well as the skills and attitude of the employees. Based on the theory of Haeckel et al (2003, p.20) the product and service factors emit clues which are mainly processed in a conscious and logical manner. On the other hand there is the third category in the table. The 'experience' lists factors which emit clues that create emotional and affective responses. Those clues are basically experienced through the human senses. So for example the category includes the noise level in the restaurant, the lightning of the dining area, or the body odor of the service employee.

Haeckel et al (2003, p.20) further divide emotional clues into two sub groups. ‘Mechanics’ are clues that are emitted by things, whereas ‘humanics’ stem from interactions with people. Hereby one might recognize that the differences between the functionality of service and humanics are quite subtle. Referring to the restaurant example from Table 2 the differentiation can be explained. For instance looking at a server taking orders from guests generally represents a functional clue. However, the tone and volume of his speech can be seen as an emotional clue and therefore belongs to the group of humanics. According to Haeckel et al (2003, p.20) emotional clues surround the functionality of goods and services. It is important to understand however, that “functional, mechanics and humanics are synergistic rather than additive”. This means that for a great total customer experience all kinds of clues should be included, combined and interrelated throughout the whole service experience (Haeckel, 2003, p.20).

| Product | Service | Experience |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location • Design • Decoration • Spacing • Size • Furniture (tables, seating) • Table setting • Condition and quality of: Silverware • Glasses • Serviette • Ceramics • Table cloths • Menu (variety, quality, sophistication, presentation) • Food • Drinks • Bathroom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting • Order taking • Attendance • Responsiveness • Skills • Waiting time • Attitude of servers (towards work, guests) • Smile • Body language • Friendliness • Language • Correctness of servings • Serving style • Gratitude • Customer involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lightning • Colors • Noise level • Background noise (from street, kitchen, ventilation, electronics) • Music • Conversations • Sound/volume of speech • Inflection • Temperature • Smell (Kitchen, Bathroom) • Atmosphere • Clientele • Air draft • Air (supply, freshness, smoke) • Comfort |

Table 2: Restaurant Components (adopted from Haeckel et al, 2003; Bitner, 1992; Frochot&Batat, 2013)

Considering again the definition of total customer experiences there is an important element that further leads to the involvement of human senses in a service experience. Haeckel et al (2003, p.18) were talking about so-called 'atmospheric stimuli' which are going to be described in the next section.

2.2.3 Atmospherics and servicescape

Bitner (1992) found that due to the intangibility of service consumers want to find tangible cues which represent a company's capabilities and overall perceived quality. Therefore, the surroundings are highly influential in creating a holistic image. This factor becomes even more important because of the inseparability of services. This means that due to the fact that in services the consumers have to be present during the whole delivery process the surrounding environment can completely determine the customer's behavior (Belk, 1975).

According to the theory of Bitner (1992) the so-called 'servicescape' is defined as the physical environment that has a strong influence on customers' experiences. The researcher named three dimensions. First there are 'ambient conditions' which include temperature, music, noise, air quality; second are the 'spatial layout and functionality' which involve layout and furnishing and finally 'signs, symbols and artefacts' which are for example signage, style and décor. Frochot and Batat (2013, p. 94) suggest that the servicescape is especially important in tourism as the consumers in this case spend such a long time in the service environment. Therefore, companies should lay high importance in focusing on managing this factor and hence the experience.

Another important element that, according to Kotler (1974), can have an ultimate effect on customers' purchasing behavior are the so-called 'atmospherics'. These are defined as "the process of designing the service space to influence the emotions of consumers". For example sight, scent and sound are factors that can be implemented to change the quality of atmospherics.

An interesting theory which examines the reaction of consumers to environmental experiences was suggested by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). It claims that the response between environmental stimuli and human behavior is expressed through emotions. Those then lead to reactions of either avoidance or approach. In this

context approach means that consumers enjoy the servicescape and therefore they stay longer and consume more. In contrast to that avoidance includes that consumers feel so uncomfortable in the surroundings that they leave faster and do not experience for long. Some research has been done based on this theory and it was found that for example clutter and crowding often leads to avoidance, whereas color, store music, lightning and layout and design are likely to be associated with approach (Forchot & Batat, 2013). According to Montonen and Tanski (2003) companies can even create so-called 'experience worlds' by implementing the just mentioned elements of approach. Those techniques can guide guests into a different world while for example consuming their meal.

As one could already recognize from the previous sections the involvement of senses seems to be an important factor in service experiences. To get an even better understanding of them, the next chapter is going to further describe them and their relation to services.

2.3 Senses

According to Haeckel et al (2003, p. 21) "managing customers' experiences requires awareness of all their senses throughout the experiences". The authors state that sight, sound, smell, taste and touch are direct connections to the customers' emotions. Hence, it is crucial to understand and react to the emotional needs of customers. To create positive emotional reactions such as joy, awe, interest, affection or trust companies must stage a set of enlightening clues.

Pine and Gilmore(1998) suggested engaging all five senses. According to them the sensory stimulants are recommended to surround the experience in order to increase the perceived quality. The two authors state that "the more senses an experience engages, the more effective and memorable it can be" (Pine& Gilmore, 1998, p.104).

Finding the ultimate importance of senses, Lindstrom (2005) states that nearly the whole understanding of the world is experienced through our senses. According to him the human senses are a direct connection to our memories and can hit great emotions.

Despite the fact that the human senses can have such a strong impact on the value for the customers they have been neglected for a long time in research and by marketers (Lindstrom, 2005). However, recently researchers have emphasized the need of considering the study and involvement of the sensory dimensions into the experience creation. The reason for this is that they could be highly beneficial for the overall experience and decision making (Agapito et al, 2013, p 62). Some researchers point out the relevance of placing the body into the middle of an experience and demand a more holistic approach leading from 'servicescape' to 'sensescape' (Pan& Ryan, 2009).

In order to be able to implement senses into a management strategy it is useful to understand their nature. Therefore, the next section will define them and explain their nature.

2.3.1 Defining senses

In the traditional psychological context senses are defined as "a faculty by which the body perceives an external stimulus; one of the faculties of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch" (Oxford Dictionaries). According to Hultén et al (2009, p. 17) "each of the five senses- smell, sound, sight, taste, and touch – contributes to an experience. Thinking further this means, that all senses combined are the basis for a so called 'sensory experience'. Sensory experiences are the outcome of the response of the senses to various elements or triggers. These triggers can also be called 'stimuli' (Hultén et al, 2009, p.17).

Based on the findings of a study by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (1995) human senses are sensitive to change. This means that elements that have been present for longer tend to be neglected, whereas ones that suddenly appear new to a situation are likely to trigger senses. For example "stationary or unchanging objects become part of the scenery and are mostly unseen. Customary sounds become background noise, mostly unheard" (Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 1995). The natural explanation for this lies in the instinct that environmental changes might mean danger which has to be reacted to.

According to Hultén et al (2009, p.18) "the human senses are of vital importance to our existence, and without the senses no impression could be formed. It would not

be possible to understand, feel, learn, or think without senses". This implies the necessity of considering senses in service management.

Studies have found that senses are being perceived differently depending on gender, age and cultural heritage (Lindstrom, 2005). This fact is important to consider in case a company wants to attract or affect a specific target group.

Another important fact for understanding senses and how they could affect a service experience is that the majority of all stimuli that are being sent to our senses are processed unconsciously. Only a few impressions are recognized consciously (Hultén et al, 2009, p.19). This comes to be important for this project because it implies that measuring the impact of senses on the overall quality will only be possible for the small part that is consciously experienced.

Hultén et al (2009, p.1) state that thanks to the senses consumers become conscious of companies, products and brands. For that reason studying the senses can help making an organization's marketing more successful. A technique that has earned growing interest by professional, consultants and researchers is the so-called 'sensory marketing'. This strategy will be discussed in the next section.

2.3.2 Sensory marketing

According to Hultén et al (2009, p. xii) "sensory marketing has become a synthesis of what contemporary society demands from a firm and what a firm can do to create sensory experiences with the help of the five human senses".

Krishna (2012) defined sensory marketing as "marketing that engages the consumers' senses and affects their perception, judgement and behavior". In other words sensory marketing can have an effect of an individual's final purchase decision and the overall experience (Hultén et al., 2009, p.ix).

For this paper it is interesting to know that Hultén et al (2009, p.ix) see sensory marketing as built on the theory that experiences, both goods and services, are viewed holistically. From a managerial view sensory marketing is supposed to be applied to create a long term brand awareness and to convey a sustainable image and a firm's identity (Hultén et al, 2009, p.1). According to Hultén et al (2009, p.6)

sensory marketing as well examines how a company should handle its customers more individually and personally compared to mass marketing. The authors claim firms can act successfully by contacting their customers through their emotions. The reason for this is that, as already mentioned in the earlier chapters, people have started to demand more than just the functional product attributes, namely rather a holistic experience.

Considering the just said, it is important to understand how to implement each different sense expression to create a beneficial sensory experience. Therefore, the next section will examine the five human senses – smell, sight, sound, touch and taste.

2.3.3 Five human senses

Smell

The sense of smelling is strongly connected to our emotional life. So for example specific odors can influence a person's mood and create well-being (Hultén et al, 2009, p.8). Spreading scents can create such a pleasant atmosphere that it influences customers purchasing behavior, increases the perceived quality and raises the amount of sales (Isacsson et al, 2009, p. 171).

Furthermore, odors can be used to produce long-lasting memories for consumers, and therefore loyal customer relationships. This is because the sense of smelling is so closely related with memory, that only the perception of a scent smelled before in life can be connected to earlier experiences (Hultén et al, 2009, p.7). The sense of smelling can even be used to manipulate the loyalty of customers and their behavior. "The scents of vanilla and clementine, in particular, affect customers' behavior by making them unconsciously stay longer than they would otherwise have" (Hultén et al, 2009, p. 171).

According to Isacsson et al (2009, p.172) scents are often sprayed outside stores or restaurants to attract people walking by and guide them inside. For example bakeries might intentionally lead their ventilation shafts outside to spread the smell of fresh pastry to the exterior.

Sight

The sense of sight is commonly agreed to be the most prevailing of the human senses. It is held to be the most powerful and most seductive.

According to Hultén et al (2009, p.9) visual appearances can be applied to create brand awareness and to convey a corporate identity. This can be achieved by submitting unique and distinctive images of products or a brand.

The visual appearance of products can greatly affect the perception of quality (Hultén et al, 2009, p.9). For example in restaurants this can become important not only in design of the facility but also regarding the food serving. Not without a reason there is the saying “You eat with your eyes first”. Therefore, the serving and styling of food has been of great importance for a long time and is growing in attention even more recently.

The sense of vision, just like smell, is as well closely connected to memory. “Every picture formed is compared with previous experiences and memories; every new picture has relationship to earlier sensory experiences” (Hultén et al, 2009, p.10).

For companies the visual experience can be determined through physical elements of the servicescape such as style and design of the interior, but also through intangible factors such as light and color. The application of light as such can have an enormous effect on the perception quality. This is because varying intensity and positioning of lightning can change how form, color, and texture are being perceived (Ching, 1996).

Sound

According to Hultén et al (2009, p.8) “sound has always been of great importance in society”. A reason for this might be that already from birth on humans achieve a better understanding of their surrounding through sounds.

Considering the memorability of audio experiences, the example of mobile ice cream vendors demonstrates how powerful and catching music can be. As soon as especially children hear the well memorized tune it has the ability to seduce their mind and make them want to buy the ice cream.

Studies have shown that music can even be used to guide customers to buy specific items. For example Areni and Kim (1993) found that people buy more expensive products when classical music is tuned in the shop.

Another important finding which could be exploited by for example restaurants or other service providers is that according to Hui et al (1997) the application of specific music can reduce the negative perception of long waiting times. Auditory clues can also be beneficial for sales numbers.

However, Hultén et al (2009, p.9) emphasize that it is important to understand that not only intentionally played music but also other sounds and noises need to be considered for sound experiences. Looking for example at a restaurant experience with a holistic view sounds from the use of cutlery, the voice level of the servers, the conversation of other guests or also street noise from outside could have an effect on the perceived quality. For a pleasant sound experience the elimination of disturbing noises is therefore recommendable (Hultén et al, 2009, p.9).

Touch

The sense of touch, also called tactile sense, allows humans to have physical contact with their surroundings. It gives the ability to examine three-dimensional elements.

Like with all other senses the link to memory plays an important role in the sense of touch. For example people do not even have to always touch things, but can picture how they feel just from remembering doing so in prior experiences (Hultén et al, 2009, p.11).

Sensory experiences can be for example found through examining the surface, material, temperature or weight of objects. Those factors can then be associated with a specific level of quality.

The texture of products and the ability to physically engage with them can also affect the purchasing behavior of customers. According to Pecks and Wiggins (2006) retailers should encourage customers to touch products. The reason for this is that the two researchers found that such tactile encounters are likely to persuade people to make impulse purchases and even buy items they usually do not recognize.

Another interesting application of the touch sense which affects customer behavior is related to the physical appearance of the servicescape. Hultén et al (2009, p.12) state that service providers can manipulate the length of stay and consequently the amount of money spent by customers. In the case of sensual experience this can be achieved through for example the physical texture of the seating accommodations. So for instance restaurants should provide soft and cozy chairs in order to subconsciously invite their guests to feel comfortable and therefore stay longer and consume more.

Taste

The sense of taste in marketing can contribute to the creation of an image of a product as well as it can support the reinforcement of a brand's identity. The interesting fact about this is that the respective brand does not even have to actually apply the taste sense with its product. Rather than that the sense of taste can act as an additional sensory dimension that eases to attract the customers' emotions and memory (Hultén, 2009, p.10). For example companies can serve snacks or beverages to their customers in order to differentiate them from competitors.

The sense of taste again shows how important the interaction between the different human senses is. Taste experiences strongly rely on and are influenced by smell, sight, and touch. For example it is a well-known fact that when eyes are being closed and nose is being pinched – meaning that visual and olfactory senses are eliminated – while eating something, it will be hard to determine what it actually is.

Therefore, Hultén et al (2009, p. 11) claim that the sense of taste “is often more related to the customer's whole sensory experience than to just what is put in the mouth”. This theory perfectly supports the assumption of this thesis that in a restaurant experience the holistic sensory experience can influence the perceived quality of the actual core product, namely the food served.

Talking about a holistic sensory experience it is important to understand that not only the individual senses but rather the combination of them can lead to increased experience quality. Therefore, in the next section the interaction of the five human senses will be further examined.

2.3.4 Multisensory experiences

Isacsson et al (2009, p.171) suggest that multisensory marketing means that several bodily senses are involved in the marketing and service process. According to the authors there have been various studies examining the impact of specific individual senses, as described in the previous section. However, there has been only little research done on the effect of multiple senses, especially not in the tourism and hospitality area.

According to Isacsson et al (2009, p.168) the sense of sight has been dominating in marketing, as well as in literature. Using images and design seems to be the prevailing and even overemphasized method to communicate in media and service provision. However, according to the authors marketers should not only appeal to the visuals, but rather to all of the customers' senses. Only when sound, smell, taste and touch are being triggered as well a more valuable, interesting, and authentic feeling can be created.

Lindstrom (2005) found that sight makes the most persuasive sense in brand and loyalty building with a share of 58%. Based on Lindstrom's study the second most important sense is scent with 45%, followed by sense of hearing with 41%, taste with 31% and finally touch makes only 25%.

Lindstrom (2008, p.142) furthermore conducted a great consumer research study. In that pioneering study he measured the impact of senses through stimuli testing. His findings were that the sense of sight was not as dominant in consumer behavior as formerly assumed. Rather he suggests that visual images are way more effective when they are combined with other stimuli such as sound or smell. What is interesting to be pointed out regarding the combination of such sensual experiences is that the components need to go together in order to create a pleasant and memorable feeling (Lindstrom, 2008, p.145). So for example the vision of a nicely decorated restaurant area will not evoke a likable feeling if it smells badly from the bathroom. However, when the nice vision is accompanied with a pleasant mouthwatering food-smell from the kitchen, the experience will be enhanced.

Based on the theory discussed in the previous chapters the assumptions for this thesis have been made. The next chapters will summarize the research which was conducted to prove whether the theory can be confirmed for the used dataset.

3 Methodology

In the previous chapters a theoretical framework for the following empirical research has been set. It can be seen from the literature that there has already been some research on the impact of senses on service. This study will apply both quantitative and qualitative methods to validate the existing theories.

The research will be based on a set of online TripAdvisor reviews. TripAdvisor is the largest travel website in the world, with the world's biggest travel community. It enables people to plan their perfect trip by offering more than 225 million reviews and opinions about over 4.9 million different hotels, sights, attractions, destinations and restaurants. The website accounts more than 315 million users every month (TripAdvisor). On the website users are able to write experience comments as well as they can rate the location based on a 5 level satisfaction scale. Both of these information types are going to be used to create a data set which can be used for content analysis.

It was chosen to use travelers' reviews because in such, according to Munar and Jacobsen (2014), users do not only share knowledge but typically also personal experiences. Of course it has to be considered that such experiences are personal and might be biased by the individual's expectations, previous knowledge and phantasies about the product or service. Buhalis and Law (2008) state that through the development of the internet and social media the manner people share their experiences has changed drastically. Through social media and review websites individuals spread their knowledge, experiences and emotional moments way more freely than a few years ago. Content that in the past people would have rather kept private or within their close social environment is now often shared with a worldwide virtual community. This has created an enormous pool of a new form of valuable information about consumer behavior which could be used by researchers, marketers, companies and tourism organizations (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014).

This thesis analyzes textual reviews of restaurant visitors. Therefore, the method used for research is content analysis because researchers found it to be a flexible method for examining text data (Cavanagh, 1997). Both quantitative and qualitative

content analysis is going to be conducted in order to get a wide range of information about the dataset.

First quantitative research will be performed. According to Berelson (1952) quantitative content analysis is defined as “a research technique for the systematic, objective and quantitative description of the manifest of communication”. The result of this research method is then expressed in numeric or graphical forms. The quantitative research will be conducted with the help of an elaborated content analysis and text mining software called WordStat. This statistical analysis tool uses dictionaries, which are defined by the author, to detect word matches within the reviews. The dictionaries, which can be found in Appendix 2: Sense Dictionaries, are divided into five categories, one for every human sense – smell, vision, sound, feel and taste. They comprise various words and phrases, as well as many possible synonyms and antonyms, which people are likely to mention to express sensual experiences and impressions. Table 3 contains an exemplary list of words from the dictionaries.

| SMELL | VISION | SOUND | TOUCH | TASTE |
|---------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Aroma | Appealing | Loud | Balmy | Aftertaste |
| Fragrance | Color | Music | Cold | Aromatic |
| Kitchen smell | Dark | Noisy | Comfortable | Bitter |
| Noxious | Decoration | Radio | Cozy | Delicious |
| Odor | Elegant | Scream | Hot | Flavor |
| Perfume | Illuminated | Silent | Pleasant | Salty |
| Scent | Lightened | Sounds | Smooth | Seasoning |
| Smells | Look | Talking | Soft | Sour |
| Stinky | Shiny | Voices | Temperature | Sweet |
| Stuffy | View | Whispering | Warm | Tasteful |

Table 3: Dictionaries

In order to get a more in-depth view into the content of the reviews additionally qualitative research will be conducted. This method is less objective than the quantitative one, but it allows the author to get a thorough understanding of the actual meaning of the text in the reviews (Flick, 2011). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005) qualitative content analysis is defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data”.

For the content analysis a dataset of 375 reviews about 25 restaurants in Vienna will be analyzed. There are 15 reviews for each restaurant, which are again divided equally into three satisfaction levels. The rating levels are 1 – poor / dissatisfactory, 3 – satisfactory and 5 - good /delighting. Each review contains both, text about the experience and a numerical rating. The examination of this dataset will allow answering the previously defined research questions.

4 Empirical research

4.1 Quantitative research

The first part of the empirical research of this thesis is applied to get a general insight into the data of 375 online reviews about restaurant experiences in Vienna. Using quantitative content analysis methods allows answering questions about frequencies and relations of senses and ratings.

The first question that is being answered is which sense is most frequently mentioned in the reviews. Table 4 shows the figures calculated by the content analysis program. Based on these results the sense of taste was most frequently talked about in relation to an experienced restaurant visit. The table lists three different outcomes. The column 'frequency' states the number of word matches detected in all reviews. The next column lists the percentage share of each sense in comparison to the total number of word matches within all reviews. And finally the last column shows the number of reviews in which one or more words were detected. Taking for example the sense of taste it can thus be seen that the number of cases, 138, is lower than the frequency, 210. This means that in some reviews more than just one word matched the predefined wordlist. The sense of vision accounts second place with a total of 153 word mentions and 28.7% of all word counts. The sense that lags far behind is smell, with only 8 counts and 1.5% share.

| | Frequency | Percentage Share | Number of Cases |
|--------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|
| Taste | 210 | 39.3% | 138 |
| Vision | 153 | 28.7% | 70 |
| Feel | 131 | 24.5% | 98 |
| Sound | 32 | 6.0% | 26 |
| Smell | 8 | 1.5% | 8 |

Table 4: Total Frequencies

Figure 8 illustrates the distribution of senses in a pie chart. Here it can be easily seen that taste makes up the largest part of mentions.

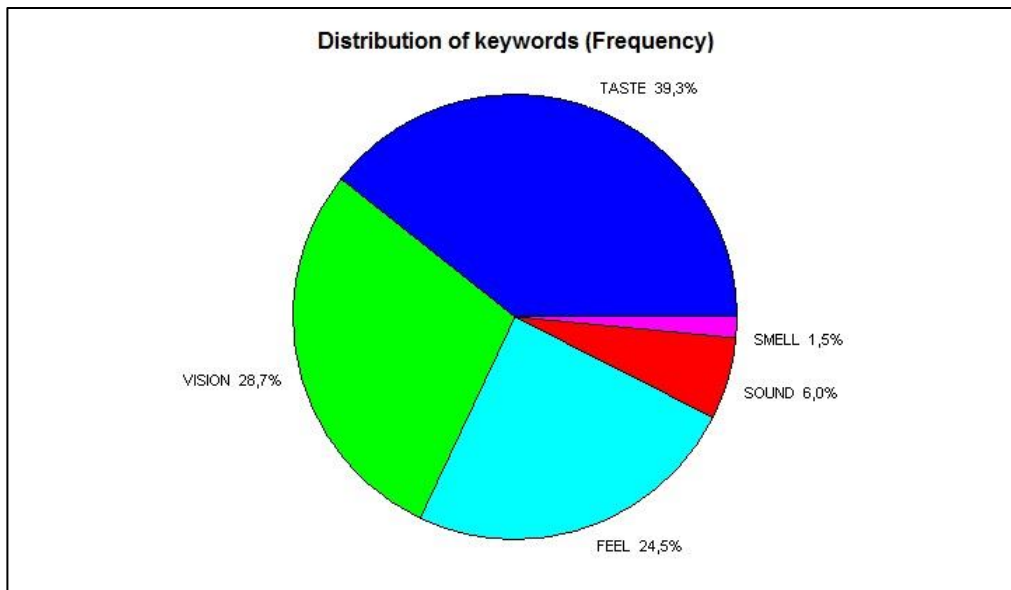


Figure 8: Pie Chart Total

Next it can be interesting to analyze whether the proportion of mentions of senses differs based on the rating of satisfaction. Therefore, the dataset was separated according to the rating levels. Then the same analysis as for the total dataset described above was conducted. Table 5 compares the results of the three satisfaction levels: 1- poor, 3- satisfactory, 5- good.

| | Frequency | | | Percentage Share | | |
|--------|-----------|----|----|------------------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Taste | 74 | 69 | 67 | 43.3% | 35.6% | 39.6% |
| Vision | 44 | 61 | 48 | 25.5% | 31.4% | 28.4% |
| Feel | 38 | 46 | 47 | 22.2% | 23.7% | 27.8% |
| Sound | 12 | 14 | 6 | 7.0% | 7.2% | 3.6% |
| Smell | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1.8% | 2.1% | 0.6 |

Table 5: Frequencies by Rating

What can be seen is that the majority of mentions in all rating levels lie within the sense of taste and the distribution is proportionally similar to the results of the total dataset in Table 4. The difference between taste and vision is smaller in the satisfactory level than in the disconfirming levels. Hence, the satisfactory level has

the largest share of vision across the three rating levels. The sense of feeling is strongest represented in the high satisfaction rating, whereas in that level sound and smell are least important compared to the other ratings.

The distribution of the word match frequencies is further being illustrated by Figure 9 to Figure 11.

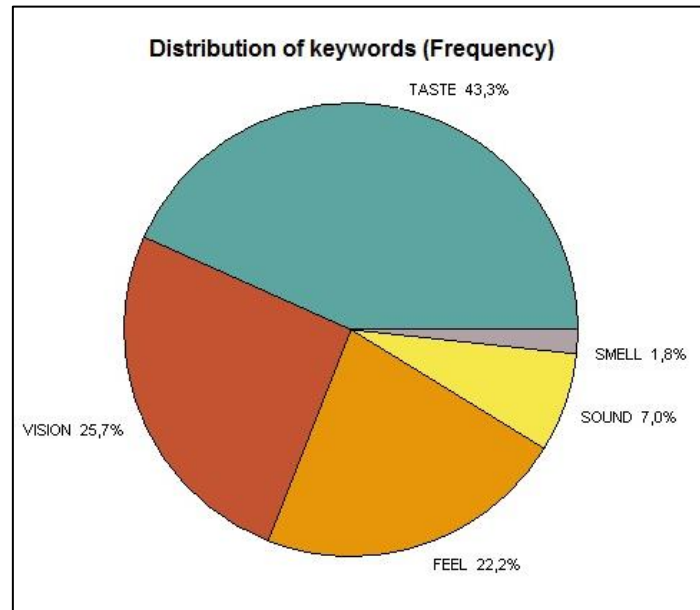


Figure 9: Pie Chart Rating 1

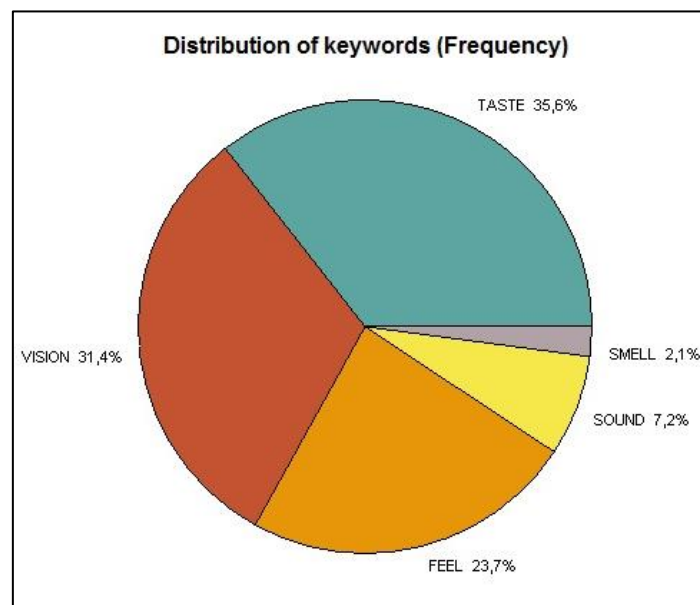


Figure 10: Pie Chart Rating 3

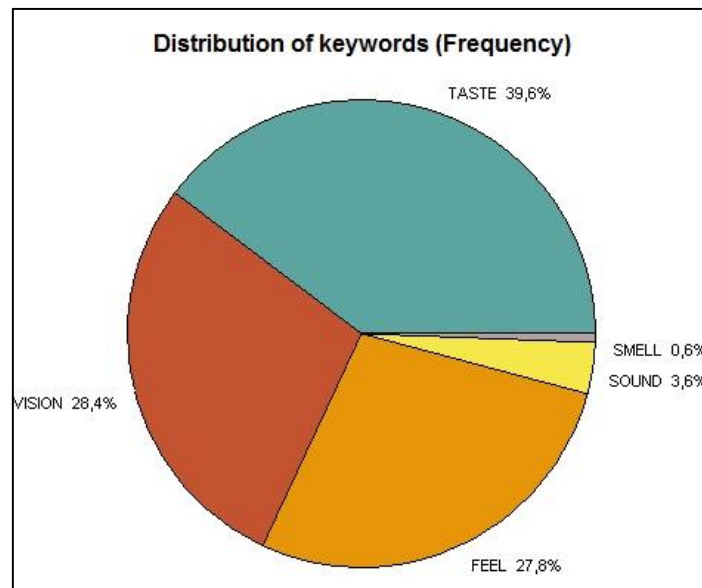


Figure 11: Pie Chart Rating 5

In order to find out which senses are likely to be mentioned together in one review one can have a look at Figure 12. The graph shows a dendrogram of the total dataset. On the left side the red blocks depict the frequencies of mentions and the right side shows the multisensory combinations. Based on this graph comments about sensual experiences of feel are most likely to be in context with ones of taste. Further, if people are talking about feel and taste they are also likely to mention impressions of sight. If guests write about feel, taste and vision they are then likely to combine it with comments about the sound in the restaurant. Smell is the widest related sense in context of the other four.

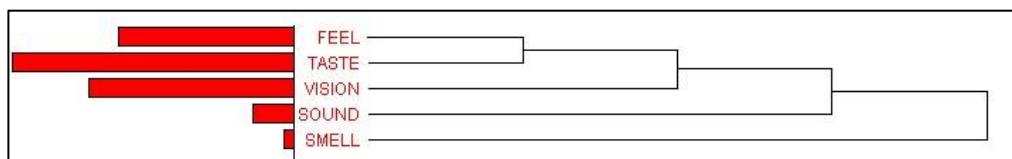


Figure 12: Dendrogram Total

It is interesting to see that these relations among the multisensory combinations are similar for the separated datasets of the rating levels poor and satisfactory, which can be taken from Figure 13 and Figure 14. Whereas, the graph for the good ratings in Figure 15 shows that sound and smell are turned around. This means that in the rating level good the sense of sound is most likely to stand alone or only in combination if all other four senses are being talked about in one review.

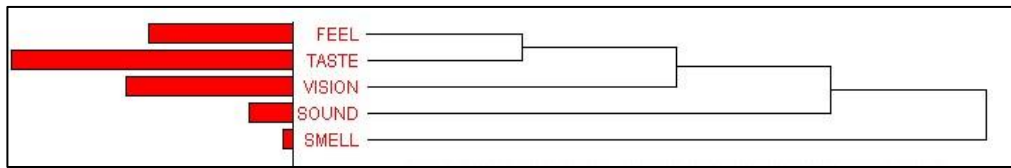


Figure 13: Dendrogram Rating 1

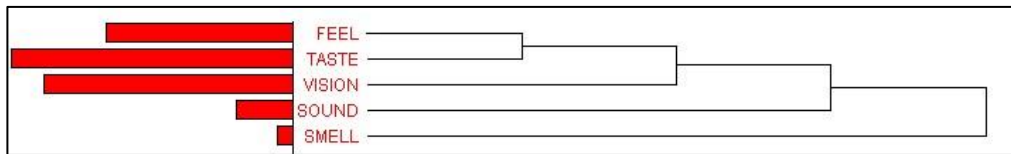


Figure 14: Dendrogram Rating 3

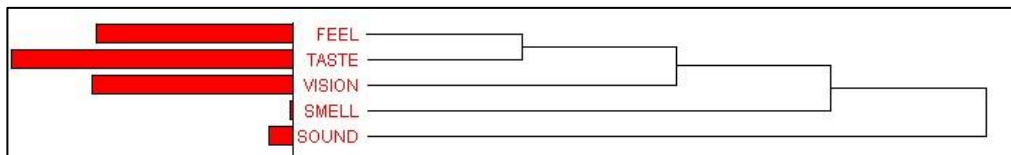


Figure 15: Dendrogram Rating 5

Another question which can be answered with the quantitative analysis is which rating level each sense affects the most. This can be detected from the cross table in Table 6. Although none of the combinations gives a significant result the table will be interpreted for this case. In terms of the dataset analyzed the cross table shows that of all mentions that were made about the sense of feel the biggest share can be found in good rated reviews. The majority of all smells are being discussed in the satisfactory level (3). In the case of sound, the satisfactory rated reviews receive 43.8%. The word matches in the category of taste is relatively equally distributed among the three rating levels, whereas the highest share of all mentions about sight lies within the satisfactory ratings.

| | 1 – poor | 3- satisfactory | 5- good | Chi2 |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|---------|-------|
| FEEL | 29,0% | 35,1% | 35,9% | 0,856 |
| SMELL | 37,5% | 50,0% | 12,5% | 1,799 |
| SOUND | 37,5% | 43,8% | 18,8% | 3,416 |
| TASTE | 35,2% | 32,9% | 31,9% | 0,633 |
| VISION | 28,8% | 39,9% | 31,4% | 3,004 |

Table 6: Senses across Ratings

The quantitative methods used in this chapter gave a good objective overview of the dataset. The results are based on predefined wordlists and rely on technical statistical programs. However, as many human experiences are being expressed very lively and diverse, quantitative research might miss on capturing the full meaning of various phrases and feelings. Thus, to get a more in-depth view into the restaurant experiences the next section will cover the findings of the qualitative research conducted by the author.

4.2 Qualitative research

For the quantitative research of the restaurant experiences a set of 30 reviews was chosen to be personally analyzed by the author. The reviews were read and examined for the occurrence of sensual aspects and their linkage to satisfaction. Therefore, the set of reviews was divided into three subsets based on their rating level. Each level, good (5), satisfactory (3) and poor (1), is represented by ten comments about various restaurants. Furthermore, it was intended to examine which elements of the service experience the senses are linked to as well as how the perception of the core product, the food and drinks, is affected by other elements of the service experience. Therefore, the author looked for mentions about the product, the service and the experience. These categories are based on the theory shown in Table 2 in the literature review. For a better demonstration the various phrases and sections in the comments about the respective categories were marked

in different colors which are as followed: **Product**, **Service**, and **Experience**. The full set of reviews can be found in Appendix 3: Restaurant reviews. It has to be mentioned that the reviews were taken over in their original form, thus possibly including spelling, format and grammar issues. In the following sections the three subsets will be described and remarkable recurring aspects will be shown.

Good rated reviews

Looking at the reviews with good ratings it can be generally said that most of the comments involve sensual experiences that support the overall high quality perception. This means that guests describe elements which they saw, tasted, felt, smelled or heard in a positive way. It seems as if those aspects enhanced their total experience. When analyzing the connection of the senses with the three categories - product, service and experience - it was detected that very often guests describe the actual core products, so the food and drinks using sensual attributes. For example in Review 1 the food is pictured as *“pure work of art for the eyes and the tastebuds”*. Furthermore, often the consistency or condition of the food or drinks is mentioned, meaning the sense of feel is used, e.g. *“Beer was delightfully cold”* (Review 6). Moreover, the presentation and looks of the dishes, hence the sense of vision, seem to play an important role for guests, as they are often described such as *“beautifully created and presented”* (Review 4). Besides the sensual experience of the food the reviewers in most cases involve comments about perfect service, like for example *“The staff is polite, accommodating, pleasant, and kind”* (Review 9) and *“The service was some of the best in the city”* (Review 5). Regarding the last and for this thesis important category, the experience, many reviewers in the highest rating level talk about the ambience and the surroundings in the restaurant. For instance in Review 4 *“The atmosphere is elegant but not so posh as to make you feel uncomfortable”*, or *“The ambience is casually elegant, moderate noise levels but nothing obtrusive”* (Review 9). Only in Review 10 a negative sensual experience attribute is mentioned, *“The only thing that bothered was the air conditioning was set far too cool. This should be changed, since a dinner at which one can not put the Jackets, is not perfect”*. However, in this case the outstanding service could outweigh and make up for the problematic sensual experience and therefore still result in an overall very good rating.

Satisfactory rated reviews

The satisfactory rating level shows more diverse effects of the three categories on the overall rating. Among those ten reviews in general two different relations of the core product to the supplementary elements can be detected. First in the reviews 11 - 16 the core product, so the food and drinks served are stated to be of good quality. However, Review 12 claims that *"To call a restaurant one of the best is not only about food but about atmosphere, service and making it an enjoyable experience"*. In the case of Review 12 the very bad service limited the actually good food to an only satisfactory overall rating. In Review 11 the food was delicious, nevertheless the restaurant is rated only average looking into the following quote: *"most disappointingly the inside of the restaurant is dull, characterless, very simple and with no atmosphere. Tables were small and cramped and we were surprised to see one group arrive with a large dog which stayed in the restaurant throughout"*. In the reviews 13, 14, 15 and 16 both the service and the experience inverted the actually good food. For example in Review 13, the tourist stated it as followed: *"the room is gloomy, the terrace is noisy"* and *"the restaurant was very crowded ... So the atmosphere was very unpleasant, stressful and also very noisy"* (Review 15). This means that in those average rated reviews senses are mostly used to describe the, in this case unpleasant experience and atmosphere in the restaurant. In terms of service Review 15 shows how strongly this element can damage the perception: *"We had to wait for a half hour for our waiter and he was so rude while taking our order that it just ruined our romantic and so special dinner experience"*. On the other hand reviews 17-20 demonstrate that a favorable application of experience and service can also have a great positive benefit on the overall rating, even in case the core product provided is of poor quality. In those reviews the food is described as rather bad, like in Review 17 *"food was terrible"*. Nevertheless, the rating is not in the lowest level. Review 17 also refers to *"authentic interior"*. In Review 19 the guest was convinced by the experience by quoting the following: *"the situation is excellent, and beautiful place. Eating on the sofas of the terrace you can see the main street of Vienna in motion and is incomparable"*. In that case the senses of feel and vision enhanced the perception of the food offering. Review 20 really brings the importance of the experience to the point: *"I like the experience in there as it looks*

like a typical Viennese cafe but the food was disappointing unfortunately. Wouldn't recommend for food but for atmosphere".

Poor rated reviews

Finally the reviews in the lowest quality level show the most diverse explanations for their ratings. First of all there are the reviews 21-24 in which simply everything was perceived negatively. Besides the bad tasting food, the sense of smell of the guests of reviews 21 and 22 were unpleasantly triggered by the bad surrounding air condition. Reviewer 21 states it as followed: *"the place smells like an ashtray. We sat outside which helped a bit, but were surrounded by tables of smokers"*. The guests of Review 23 were for example entirely confused by the rudeness of the staff. In the opinion of those reviewers the servers *"were unfriendly, seemed put out to be asked if a table was available, and treated us [them] like second class citizens for the entire meal"*, so that in the end it was *"all around a horrible dining experience and [they] would not recommend this restaurant to anybody"* (Review 23). In Review 24 nearly all five senses in relation to the food cause the big disappointment.

The guests in reviews 25, 26 and 27 enjoyed the good service and the great surroundings. For example reviewer 25 states: *"Staff still friendly and piano music that acts as a nice background"*. The guest in review 26 quotes: *"The atmosphere is very nice with dishes and cutlery design, the service is friendly"*. However, they were simply so disappointed by the bad quality of the core product that neither the service nor the experience element could improve their overall rating. Review 26 even states: *"what a nice environment and atmosphere to serve such awful food"*. The opposite effect of the two supplementary elements, service and experience, on the product, can be seen in Review 28. In that case *"The food was good, very nice plating made it all appear appetizing"*. However, *"unfortunately the service wasn't great, and we [the guests] sat upstairs and found it noisy"*. This means that in this review the appealing visual and taste senses were so badly disturbed by the sense of sound in combination with bad service, that the *"Delicious torte and coffee"* are rated with the worst quality level. Interesting comments about the implementation of service and decoration can be found in reviews 29 and 30. Based on the opinion of the guests in those reviews the service was overzealous, as reviewer 29 states: *"The restaurant is trimmed to 'elegant', but in the whole is a bit too much theater"*.

The guest in Review 30 quotes: *“The service was very awkward and at times uncomfortable”*. In Review 30 in addition to the overdone service also the design, meaning the sense of vision seems to be overexcited, *“The room looks like something out of the future, but in somewhat of a tacky way”*.

So far the findings of the empirical research have only been described. Thus, in the next section they will be analyzed and interpreted. Furthermore, the findings of this study will be compared with some theory stated in the literature review.

4.3 Analysis and interpretation of findings

According to the quantitative research of this thesis, the sense of taste is the most prevailing one in a restaurant experience. This statistical assumption could be confirmed by the qualitative in-depth analysis. This finding does not quite coincide with the theory by Lindstrom (2005), which claims that vision is the most important. In his studies taste makes only second to last place in importance. However, the result for this study seems to be explainable by the nature of the dataset used. In fact in a review customers are likely to describe the core product most thoroughly. Hence, in a restaurant context the core product food is discussed. This is often done by the means of its taste. Thus, this is likely to be the reason for the dominance of mentions about taste.

Quantitative research found that the sense of smell was by far least mentioned in the reviews. Thus, it could be concluded that it is least important in a service experience, which contradicts with Lindstrom (2005) who placed smell as second most important. However, considering the fact that senses, especially smells, are mainly processed subconsciously (Hultén et al, 2009) the result should probably not be taken too literally. Smells seem to be only recognized, and therefore possible to be mentioned in a review, when they are either, very unpleasant and disturbing, like in a few reviews the smell of smoke from cigarettes, or very strong and surprisingly changed (Howard Hughes Medical Institute, 1995). Notwithstanding, restaurant owners and other service providers should really pay attention to and integrate smells. The reason for this is that they can be used to create a comfortable and inviting atmosphere – even if they are just applied very softly and hardly noticeable (Hultén et al, 2009).

Furthermore, the dendrogram in the quantitative section shows that smells are very seldom combined with other senses. Considering the theory that senses are more effective when they are connected with other senses (Lindstrom, 2005), it becomes even more advisable for service providers to improve the holistic sensual experience by implementing sense combinations. Looking at the results from this research especially smell should be more concentrated on and better involved with other matching senses. For example in combination with sounds they are likely to improve the perceived quality of the looks of food or interior (Lindstrom, 2005).

When it comes to the question to which element of a service experience senses are closest linked, based on the qualitative research it can be said that in a restaurant context they are most often related to 'the product'. This means that senses are very often used to describe the quality of the core product, in this case, the food served. Besides the taste, reviewers described the looks and the consistency of the food. Thus, visual and tactile senses are involved. This coincides with the findings in the dendrogram of the qualitative analysis which shows that senses of taste, touch and sight are most likely combined together. Furthermore, besides the food other parts which are counted to the category of products are related to senses. Namely for example the furniture, the design and decoration are repeatedly mentioned in terms of sensual impressions. Of course the element 'experience' was also represented by senses. This element mainly described the atmosphere and surroundings in the restaurant area. Pleasant background music or rather disturbing noises are examples for the sense of hearing mentioned in some reviews, which influenced their rating. Comments about the temperature, meaning triggers of the sense of touch were also often part of the evaluation of the experience. Thus, the findings confirm the theory by Bitner (1992) that atmospherics can have a strong impact on consumer behavior. The only category that was rarely linked to senses is 'service', but this element did often also have a strong impact on the overall rating.

Regarding the rating and thus the effect of senses on satisfaction, both quantitative and qualitative research found that mentions about senses occur similarly among all three rating levels. Based on the qualitative findings it seems as if in the good rating level senses are mostly used to describe and support the core product, whereas in the satisfactory and the poor rating levels besides the food also supplementary

elements such as the surrounding or atmosphere are discussed. Thus, it can be seen that senses can really have strong effects, both positive and negative, on customer behavior and therefore the overall satisfaction, as already found by many researchers (Hultén et al, 2009; Lindstrom, 2005). Therefore, it is highly recommendable for service providers and especially restaurant owners to avoid or reduce unpleasant stimuli, such as disturbing smells like smoke or annoying background noises, and rather increase the use of sensually pleasant triggers such as subliminal smells, soft lightning, cozy furniture and matching background music. This would create an inviting holistic sensory experience (Hultén et al, 2009) and in turn lead to an improvement of the overall perceived quality and thus satisfaction level.

After collecting both theoretical and empirical research a profound understanding of the importance of senses has been gathered. Hence, this thesis can be finalized by summing up and answering the initial research questions in the following conclusion.

5 Conclusion

With the knowledge gained through the thorough analysis of both, existing literature and conducted research the author is finally able to answer all research questions which were posed in the beginning of this thesis.

First with the help of existing theories and literature by various researchers the three sub questions could be answered. These were as followed:

1. What is service quality and how can it be increased?
2. What makes service experiences satisfactory?
3. What are senses and how are they related to services?

Service quality can be seen as the difference between the customers' expectations and the perception of the actually delivered service (Parasuraman et al, 1985). Thus, when the customer's expectations are met the service is perceived as satisfactory. In order to raise the level of quality, service providers have to fully understand the expectations and needs of their guests. Service quality measures tangible and intangible elements of a service encounter. It considers the quality of the product and the service. However, a few firms have started to understand that customers demand more than those two elements, namely an experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The holistic method called 'total customer experience management' if applied efficiently can create a great competitive advantage for companies as it is likely to build strong and loyal relationships with customers (Haeckel et al, 2003). Based on this theory service experiences can be enhanced by including a variety of clues which meet or exceed the customers' expectations. These clues can be anything that one could see, feel, smell, taste or hear (Haeckel et al, 2003). In other words service providers should include elements which are consciously or subconsciously processed through the five human senses. According to Pine and Gilmore (1999) the perceived quality of service experiences can be increased when they are surrounded by sensory experiences. Lindstrom (2005) stated that human senses are a direct connection to humans' memories. Thus, the more senses a service experience engages the more effective and memorable it can be (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Through further considering the discussed literature and analyzing the conducted empirical research the two main research questions, stated below, could be answered.

1. In which way do senses impact service experiences?
2. How are sense related to satisfaction?

Generally it can be said that senses really can have a strong impact on the perceived quality of service experiences. It was found that all five human senses can be linked to the product as well as to the surrounding environment of a service encounter. In that way they can heavily affect the overall perceived quality and thus the satisfaction level. Therefore, over all, it is very recommendable for service providers to pay great attention to sensual impressions and implement them into their management strategy.

6 Limitations and recommendations

Within the work for this thesis a few issues that limited the research were encountered. These are going to be discussed in this chapter and recommendations for future research will be given.

The first and most prevailing limitation is the fact that most sensual experiences are actually solely processed unconsciously. Only a minority is being experienced consciously (Hultén et al, 2009, p.19). Considering this fact, content analysis enables to examine elements that consumers write about their experience. Thus, the reviews about restaurant experiences are very likely to solely involve comments about conscious sensations. This means that a big part of the actual total sensual experience is missing in this measurement. Therefore, it is recommendable for further researchers to apply scientific methods to measure brain activity or stimuli testing in order to detect subconscious stimuli which also strongly determine humans' well-being and therefore their perception of quality.

Another limitation was faced within the quantitative research. Through the content analysis based on word mining of designed dictionaries probably not all expressions and comments about senses can be detected. Furthermore, in some cases specific words in the dictionaries can be polysemous. In other words, terms could be counted into the statistics although in the reviews they were used in a different word sense. This is likely to lead to impaired and insignificant results. This was one of the reasons for conducting additional qualitative research in order to profoundly examine the relevant meanings and comments of the reviews.

Finally, it has to be considered that the empirical research for this thesis was based on reviews about restaurants. Those lead to results in which the sense of taste seems to be most prevailing. However, in case of other service experiences research might draw other results with different rankings of the human senses. Thus, through further research with data about other service settings, service providers and marketers could gain more valuable information.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: 22 items of the SERVQUAL questionnaire

Questions

Tangibles

- 1) The technical equipment of ... is totally up to date
- 2) The office is attractive
- 3) The employees are well dressed
- 4) Tools to help perform the service are attractive

Reliability

- 5) Promises to perform the service within a certain time are always kept
- 6) Complaints or problems solved with great concern
- 7) ... delivers the service correctly at one go
- 8) ... delivers the service at the time agreed
- 9) The administration/ order registration is never incorrect

Responsiveness

- 10) One cannot expect ... customers about the exact time of delivery
- 11) It is not realistic to expect immediate service delivery from ...
- 12) Employees of ... are not always willing to help customers
- 13) It is acceptable that employees are too busy to help customers immediately

Assurance

- 14) The behavior of the employees of ... impresses customers with the liability of the service
- 15) Customers feel confident when in contact with the employees of ...
- 16) Employees are always friendly and courteous
- 17) Employees possess the knowledge to answer questions of customers

Empathy

- 18) From employees of ... one cannot expect to pay attention to each customer individually

- 19) From employees of ... one cannot expect to pay personal attention to each customer
- 20) It is not realistic to expect from employees of ... to understand the specific needs of customers
- 21) It is not realistic to expect from employees of ... to only serve the interest of the customer
- 22) One cannot expect the opening hours are appropriate for all customers

(Zeithaml et al, 1990)

Appendix 2: Sense Dictionaries

| SMELL | VISION | SOUND | TOUCH | TASTE |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|
| Airless | Alluring | Audible | Air | Acid |
| Aroma | Appeal | Audio | Air condition | Acidic |
| Aromas | Appealed | Band | Airy | Acidulous |
| Aromatic | Appealing | Buzz | Balmy | Acrid |
| Bouquet | Appeals | Buzzed | Bland | Acridly |
| Fragrance | Attractive | Buzzing | Brisk | Aftertaste |
| Fragrances | Attractively | Calm | Broiling | Appetizing |
| Fragrant | Beautiful | Harsh | Chill | Aroma |
| Fragranced | Beautifully | Harshly | Chilled | Aromas |
| Frowsy | Bright | Hear | Chilly | Aromatic |
| Frowzy | Brightly | Heard | Coarse | Bitter |
| Fuggy | Brilliance | Hum | Cold | Bitterly |
| Fust | Brilliant | Hummed | Comfortable | Briny |
| Fusty | Candles | Humming | Comfy | Condiment |
| Kitchen smell | Color | Hush | Cozy | Condiments |
| Mold | Colored | Hushed | Creamy | Daintily |
| Moldy | Colorful | Inaudible | Crisp | Dainty |
| Mould | Colors | Loud | Crispy | Delicate |
| Mouldy | Colour | Loudly | Cushiony | Delicately |
| Muggy | Colourful | Music | Cushy | Delicious |
| Musty | Coloured | Musik | Damp | Deliciously |
| Noxious | Colours | Noise | Downy | Disgust |
| Noxiously | Cute | Noiseless | Draft | Disgusted |
| Odor | Dark | Noises | Drafty | Disgusting |
| Odoriferous | Darkened | Noise level | Dried | Distasteful |
| Odors | Daylight | Noisy | Drought | Distastefully |
| Odour | Décor | Quiet | Droughty | Flavored |
| Odorant | Decorated | Ratio | Dry | Flavors |
| Odourant | Decoration | Rang | Elastic | Flavorsome |
| Odours | Design | Resonant | Fine | Flavor |
| Perfume | Designed | Resonating | Fleece | Fruity |
| Perfumed | Dim | Resound | Fleecy | Ginger |
| Perfumes | Dimmed | Resounded | Fluffy | Goey |

| | | | | |
|------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Redolence | Dismal | Resounding | Freeze | Herbaceous |
| Redolently | Drab | Resounds | Freezing | Honeyed |
| Repugnant | Dusky | Ringing | Hardened | Inspid |
| Rotten | Elegant | Scream | Heat | Nectarous |
| Rotting | Gloomy | Screaming | Heated | Overcooked |
| Scent | Gorgeous | Screams | Hot | Oversalted |
| Scented | Graceful | Shout | Humid | Overspiced |
| Smell | Gracefully | Shouted | Humidity | Piquant |
| Smelled | Illuminated | Shouting | Icy | Pungency |
| Smelling | Illumination | Silence | Lukewarm | Pungent |
| Smells | Image | Silent | Lukewarmly | Saline |
| Smelly | Indirect | Silentious | Mild | Salt |
| Stale | lightning | Sound | Mildly | Salted |
| Staled | Light | Sounded | Pleasant | Salty |
| Stifling | Lightened | Sounds | Pleasantly | Savor |
| Stink | Lights | Sound level | Rough | Seasoned |
| Stinks | Look | Talk | Silky | Seasoning |
| Stinky | Looked | Talked | Sizzling | Sharp |
| Stuffily | Looks | Talking | Smooth | Smack |
| Stuffy | Lucid | Voice | Smoothly | Smacked |
| | Marvelous | Voices | Soft | Smacking |
| | Marvelously | Whisper | Softly | Sour |
| | Picturesque | Whispering | Squashy | Spice |
| | Pretty | | Stiff | Spiced |
| | Radiance | | Stiffly | Spices |
| | Radiant | | Temperatures | Spicily |
| | Saw | | Temperate | Sugar |
| | See | | Temperature | Sugary |
| | Shade | | Tender | Sweet |
| | Shaded | | Tenderly | Sweetened |
| | Shades | | Tepid | Sweetly |
| | Shady | | Tepidly | Syrupy |
| | Shine | | Velvet | Tang |
| | Shiny | | Velvety | Tangy |
| | Ugly | | Warm | Tart |
| | Unattractive | | Warmed | Tartly |
| | Unattractively | | Wet | Taste |
| | View | | | Tasted |
| | Views | | | Tasteful |
| | | | | Tastiest |
| | | | | Tastily |
| | | | | Tasting |
| | | | | Tastes |
| | | | | Tasty |
| | | | | Unsalted |
| | | | | Unsavory |
| | | | | Unsweetened |
| | | | | Yummy |

Appendix 3: Restaurant reviews

Good rating level:

1. This is family-owned restaurant run by Chef Heinz Reitbauer and his lovely wife, Birgit, who are clearly perfectionists. We booked a table for lunch well in advance as we knew this restaurant was one we should not miss during our trip to Vienna. My wife and I ordered the degustation menu and our children (13 and 10 yrs old) had the three course meal. Each course was sublime! pure work of art for the eyes and the tastebuds. What stood out was the creativity behind each dish - where in the world would you have freshwater fish cooked in heated beeswax in front of your eyes? The extensive bread trolley was truly impressive and the wine pairing was simply perfect. We were so delighted with our experience that we asked for a table for new year's eve - which we knew we had very slim chance of getting. But we were lucky and they were able to accommodate us. It was the best way to start the new year in such a classy surroundings and out of this world food. What impressed us was that in spite of it being new year's eve, we could see the Chef (through the open kitchen) working hard and inspecting every single dish that left his kitchen. A true hard-working professional, passionate about his food and restaurant. It was a wonderful culinary experience.(5)
2. Incredible Atmosphere, History and Piano" Loved every second of our afternoon coffee at cafe central. This is a must do experience of Vienna. Incredibly professional and friendly staff, lovely live piano in the background, awesome decor and architecture with the history of famous names eating here. you can almost feel their presence. the cake and coffee were good, not the best I have had in Vienna but close and presented delightfully. We also bought the book that has recipes of their kitchen and the history. Highly recommended and not overpriced. We are coming back for breakfast as it is pretty reasonably priced. (5)
3. It was next to our hotel, Radisson blue style. After wandering all day around the Hofburg it was great to stop there. The interior is just beautiful with all the marble. As with all Viennese cafes, you can just stay there and enjoy the ambiance. Their variety of Viennese cakes is great, they all seem to cost over 4 Euros. (5)
4. Went last night with another couple. The atmosphere is elegant but not so posh as to make you feel uncomfortable. At the recommendation of the waiter we all had the 5 course chef's menu. There were several small bites provided before the actual meal began which was a very nice touch. Each were beautifully created and presented. The small bites were followed by a duck liver pate with smoked eel and some decorative and tasty accompaniments. There was also a small but sufficient sample of oyster

soup. The main was a venison loin prepared via sous vide which delivers a consistent temperature throughout the meat. There was a simple cheese course and a very nice sorbet. Overall the service was superb, the food delightful and the wine excellent. For the four of us we agreed that this entire experience provided one of the best, perhaps even the very best dining we have ever enjoyed. Highly recommended and not too bad on the wallet for what you are getting (5)

5. We first had dinner here as it was within close walking distance to our hotel (Marriott). We ended up heading back again during our week in Vienna as it was so delicious! My mouth waters just remembering the fantastic authentic food! Both times I called ahead for a reservation as not to get there and be disappointed. The service was some of the best in the city and the cozy atmosphere and decor fit perfectly with the rustic food. It was definitely the highlight of our trip - highly recommended! (5)
6. Went for dinner. Able to get a reservation at 5pm for 6:30. Not very busy so we got all the attention. Weather was hot but we sat outside and were quite comfortable. Beer was delightfully cold. They tailored a salad with chicken for my wife that she said was perfect. I had the green salad with bacon avocado and prawns. The prawns were large, and whole, and tasty even though a little fishy smelling. Next came the sole which was marvelously cooked and filleted perfectly with no bones. A side of spaghetti pasta with olive oil and garlic was salty and had a spice to it. Overall a pleasant experience and a place to hit if you want Italian.(5)
7. I visited this restaurant with a group of friends without a reservation and, when we saw how busy it was, we didn't think we would get in. Luckily, one of the staff managed to find us a large table in the cellar dining area. The restaurant has its own excellent beers and the food was typically Viennese and was also excellent. I had the potato soup with mushroom to start, which was possibly the best soup I have ever eaten. It was very creamy and full of flavour and far more interesting than it sounds. For the main I had roast liver and my wife had Viennese style sirloin. The liver is a signature dish and the sirloin is a dish that is widely available in the city. Both were excellent and highly recommended. There was a good atmosphere and the staff were friendly and helpful.(5)
8. Everything about the restaurant suggests an unusual dining experience. It is out of the way on a quiet side street. The restaurant has old style charm. The menu is fixed and serve two small courses at a time. We enjoyed it all. The upscale menu included an exotic stew of heart, lungs and sweetbreads that turned out to be superb. One of our party was a vegetarian and the restaurant was able to quickly create a special menu for her. The meal did take some time but we did not find it a problem as we enjoyed the wine and company. The wait staff was friendly and helpful, particularly with selecting the Austrian wines. This is an unusual dining experience but it works. It is

certainly worth the effort to get to the restaurant. When in Vienna give it a try.(5)

9. was looking for something close to my hotel, **since the weather was cold and rainy tonight**. At Eight was just a couple of blocks away and had good reviews, so I chose it for my first meal in Vienna. What a brilliant surprise! The **staff is polite, accommodating, pleasant, and kind**. I was dining alone, which didn't faze them at all. The maitre'd and the server were able to easily adapt my preferred meal choices for my food allergies. He also recommended an Austrian **wine (red blend) which paired perfectly with my meal**. The food - portions are just right, nothing over-the-top. Flavors are **creative and done perfectly. Fabulous**. There's no high pressure sales here, **no rushing you out the door when you've finished eating**. The **ambiance is casually elegant, moderate noise levels but nothing obtrusive**. I can't say enough good things about this place. Really lovely all around.(5)
10. The **food was very well coordinated** and gave us just very good. Especially the smoked asparagus salad with strawberries, crispy Vulkanoschinken and rosemary were outstanding! The only thing that **bothered was the air conditioning was set far too cool. This should be changed**, since a dinner at which one can not put the Jackets, is **not perfect**. Thank you to the two gentlemen **Bernard and Daniel who looked after us very well** and the **cold of space have thus made more bearable**. Thanks again to the kitchen and the service! (5)

Satisfactory rating level:

11. **"Good food but zero atmosphere"** The reviews are so good from others and we were really looking forward to it but to be honest we were disappointed and rather underwhelmed. While there's no doubt that the **food was delicious and there was plenty of it**, the **waiting staff were OK but not great and quite difficult to attract**, but **most disappointingly the inside of the restaurant is dull, characterless, very simple and with no atmosphere**. **Tables were small and cramped** and we were surprised to **see one group arrive with a large dog which stayed in the restaurant throughout**. There's an outside area which may well have been more fun and maybe that's the key. I'd like the opportunity to try again and sit out there and perhaps I'd completely change my mind but at the moment I feel this is a reasonable restaurant, serving good food but I wouldn't rate it anything like as highly as others have. (3)

12. Disappointing!"To call a restaurant one of the best is not only about food but about atmosphere, service and making it an enjoyable experience. Unfortunately none of it was there during our dinner at this apparently best in Vienna restaurant. The food is ok but my husband and I could not wait to leave. Too pretentious for no particular reason and people working there have been doing the same thing for too long, they really seemed to need a break!(3)
13. We went because of the reviews, that it would be an inexpensive place with good food. We were met with a waiter looking at his watch who told us we had one hour to finish. :) we got a couple on tap beers and the wiener schnitzel. The meat was well cooked and not greasy but not really tasty. The beer was great. The place was not clean and it took them 15 minutes to take our order. Wouldn't go back but it seems like a comfort food kind of place. €25 bill.(3)
14. The room is gloomy, the terrace is noisy, the staff did not give you an inch, plates are beautiful but ridiculously small portions, overpriced wines, only good surprise: free dessert because the server had forget it ...! Remember, it's a sham, but it is fake! (3)
15. It is known as very popular restaurant in Vienna. Mainly for the Tafelshpitz - boiled beef. Almost everybody takes this dish, but I can't say now it is something impressive, simply soft boiled beef. We planned to visit this restaurant for our first anniversary. We had a reservation for a non-smoking table and got a small table in the winter garden. We came in the afternoon, the restaurant was very crowded, and the wait stuff was not nice at all, and gave us the impression like they don't want to serve us. So the atmosphere was very unpleasant, stressful and also very noisy. We had to wait for a half hour for our waiter and he was so rude while taking our order that it just ruined our romantic and so special dinner experience!(3)
16. Food was quite good - ordered the schnitzel (as you do in Vienna) and it was massive. However we were seated inside and with the windows closed it was stifling - also the wait-staff didn't spend much time inside so it took ages to get anybody's attention to order food or drink. To pay the bill I eventually

lost patience and just got up and hovered near the door. A bit disappointing really.(3)

17. The place has an authentic interior but the food was terrible. The four of us ordered different menus but they all looked the same when we had the plates. Nothing wrong with friture but this was far too much. It tasted and looked the same. Don't go there If you want good food. Go there if you're starving. (3)

18. After a long walk in the city centre we decided that we need to have a lunch. A quick look on TripAdvisor app and we were sitting in a cosy restaurant with a very friendly service. Too bad that we found the food to be nice but not excellent. The soup was a bit too salty, and the main course was...well, nothing special. The price was not too high, but I would expect a much more refined meal for the money. Still, if you are nearby and need a quiet place for a nourishment before continuing to explore the city, it is acceptable. The coffee (espresso) is indeed excellent.(3)

19. My boyfriend and I went because we saw on this website and caught our attention. I recognize that the situation is excellent, and beautiful place. Eating on the sofas of the terrace you can see the main street of Vienna in motion and is incomparable. The problem is that the food is pretty average, minimal, and with enough current flavors ... It is very expensive for what they offer. There are much better places in Vienna.(3)

20. Disappointing" It looks enchanting and the cakes look really lovely but looks could be deceiving. To my and my friend's taste the cakes were almost inedible - too sweet, the texture was off and the tea wasn't good either (I am a big fan of good tea). I like the experience in there as it looks like a typical Viennese cafe but the food was disappointing unfortunately. Perhaps I chose wrong desserts but in terms of tea, they only have one brand so no excuses there. Wouldn't recommend for food but for atmosphere - perhaps. (3)

Poor rating level:

21. Well, after finally finding this place, and not trusting the map placement by TripAdvisor, we arrived tired and hungry. It's a half mile or so north of Rennbahnweg U red-line metro stop on the main road, just past the Shell station. Its in the middle of nowhere, and the place smells like an ashtray. We sat outside which helped a bit, but were surrounded by tables of smokers. The portions are ridiculous, which would normally be great, I only wish it was appetizing enough to want to eat it. We had made an attempt to go on a Sunday evening, then found out they were closed before we arrived. No big deal, we'll try again another night. I feel ripped off that we made 2 attempts to go to this place only to be horribly dissatisfied. It doesn't deserve its high TA rating. Don't be misled. I enjoyed the french fries the most. That's pretty sad.(1)
22. I went to this well recommended restaurant at tripadvisor with my wife and was totally dissapointed. As non of us is smoking, it was very annoying that the smoke is all over in the restaurant . We were waiting a pretty long time to be served but we got a german menue and asked for the english one as we don't speak german at all...and the waiter just answered we don't have one. We expected at least an english menue in a restaurant in the city center. The waiter came than once again and explained very quick the diffrent meals and we had to decide imediatly. What we ordered came with no taste and very dry. The wine was ok. Vienna is so nice and this restaurant is definitely not. We can not recommend this to anybody. (1)
23. We located the restaurant using a guide to 'authentic' Viennese cuisine. The guide was in English and said this was a friendly, fun, and enjoyable experience. Reverse everything that the brochure said and you have it about right. My German is very limited. They were unfriendly, seemed put out to be asked if a table was available, and treated us like second class citizens for the entire meal. The English menu is not translated, but a completely different, and a completely inedible list of food. The prices were fairly high, even for the ambiance (which was nice, but not stellar). We were polite, respectful, and are still entirely confused by the rudeness of the staff. Also, on why this restaurant was recommended. The dishes that the other, native,

patrons were served looked lovely and appetizing, but I can only comment on what we were 'allowed' to order. Because even after asking them to recommend something 'authentic' they merely pointed to the English menu only and did not seem the least interested in helping us. This was all around a horrible dining experience and would not recommend this restaurant to anybody--tourist or otherwise. Awful.(1)

24. "very poor quality of food" During our short visit sit to Vienna, my husband and I decided to go for Indian dinner and selected this restaurant through internet. Since my husband lived in England for four years, he is a great fan of Indian food. We ordered three different curry dishes for main dish, Samosas as appetizer and Mangolassi to drink. Mangolassi looked very attractive because of the mango colour but no taste of mango at all. Samosas were still half frozen and fully soaked in stinky oil. Hoping to have main dishes better in taste, we left it half finished. The flavour of all the curries looked same in colour and tasted as if it was served in the same curry sauce, no taste of Indian spices but just coloured sauce in cheap quality of oil. The lamb meat was not tender at all. (1)
25. The atmosphere is very nice with dishes and cutlery design, the service is friendly (they help you with your jacket, you open the door). To start brought as a gift from the kitchen a tasty potato soup, then we ate: a starter with three kinds of different preparations made from eggplant, the Khinkali (ravioli shelves of minced meat) and lamb kebabs. Unfortunately, the lamb was not easy to eat, overcooked and too dry. The disappointment for the meat has been tempered by another gift from the kitchen: a beautiful head portion of strawberries with cream excellent. If it was not for the meat I would have given a higher rating (1)
26. "Not at all good" We went to this restaurant some time ago and I now have time go give my opinion. I know this restaurant from the very old times - when it was at its previous location. There we had once a french dinner that was outstanding. I came back many years later with my wife and we tried it. I do not know where and how it got its Michelin stars but the food was absolutely terrible and not up to any Michelin star standard. Their food combinations were absolutely odd, nothing fitted together - in terms of

- taste, structure of the food and consistency. We were so disappointed - what a nice environment and atmosphere to serve such awful food. I hope for this restaurant that they had just back luck with the chef de cuisine at that time and that they have improved since. We though felt that trying to cook fancy and "special" is something worth aiming for but one does not just overdo it and mix things that do not fit. Sorry to say - this is not not one inch on international standard and there are many many good restaurants in Vienna that are 100 times better and much cheaper. Bottom line: totally overhyped and over-engineered food and far too expensive too, (1)
27. Compared to the expectations generated by the great reviews on tripadvisor, this restaurant has definitely disappointed. Environment that would call refined, but rather retro. Smaller portions we had ever seen, even in comparison to other world-class restaurants, and certainly not memorable. Staff still friendly and piano music that acts as a nice background.(1)
28. "Delicious torte and coffee, ruined by the service" Stopped in for a break from shopping on Graben street, wanted to try a traditional torte and coffee. The food was good, very nice plating made it all appear appetizing. Unfortunately the service wasn't great, and. we sat upstairs and found it noisy. We made the mistake of taking our bill downstairs to pay at the counter. (1)
29. The decor is very nice, but service average. The restaurant is trimmed to "elegant", but in the whole is a bit too much theater, because there where it really matters, lack of attention (eg bread for starters missing, comes only on demand), elsewhere it is a bit show too much (wine pour). The food tastes okay. The Georgian cuisine is actually very intense taste, here are the dishes spiced but fairly mild. It is missing in almost every dish, which I had garlic. But what is really amazing is that the food is served without Georgian bread! This is an absolute must in the Georgian kitchen. Baguette to not the point. (1)
30. We were very excited about being able to eat at Silvio Nickol's new restaurant during our recent visit to Vienna. It was terribly disappointing. It may well be that our disappointment was in part because of our wonderful

dinner at Steirereck the night before, which was amazing, but from the minute we arrived at Silvio Nickol's new restaurant it was terrible. The service was very awkward and at times uncomfortable. The food, which undoubtedly creative and beautiful, and felt like an 'adventure', lacked something at its core. While we ate every course, we did not enjoy one of them. We are both adventurous eaters who enjoy most things. The room looks like something out of the future, but in somewhat of a tacky way. Maybe it is still working out its quirks as it only opened in April, I would suggest for the time being spending your euros at Steirereck in Vienna.(1)