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Café Observations and Suggestions

Over the course of a couple days, I spent time in the cafeteria and seating area in order to observe the presentation, set-up, and customer choices in the café. I tried to go out at varying times throughout both lunch and dinner meal times to get a more comprehensive view of what the customers were buying at different times.

Setup/Placement/Presentation

(What can be improved?)

Breakfast

Cold Cereal

One item that I never saw anyone walk out of the café with was cold cereal. After looking at the set-up, I think that the cold cereal station could be improved.

- Perhaps different bowls could be used; the current ones are really small and flimsy.
- The placement of the milk could also be changed. It is on the opposite side of the café from the cereal.
- In addition to this, I think if additional options were offered, the cereal would be bought more often.

Bagels

The bagels and breads that were in the baskets on the lower shelves could definitely be improved in appearance and placement. They are currently wrapped in plastic wrap which does not look appealing or appetizing. The bagels themselves look small and not of high quality.

- Adding plastic bagel bins would reduce the need to wrap them in plastic to retain freshness. This would greatly improve the look of the bagels.
- Adding more bagel flavors and having them separated out into different bins would also be helpful. Seasonal flavors could be brought in and advertised.

Hot cereal

The hot cereal station, by mid breakfast was messy

- The cloth over the containers may help in creating a more sophisticated look, but this is counterproductive when it ends up with oatmeal all over it, which can't easily be cleaned mid-shift. Doing away with this cloth and simply keeping the metal containers wiped would help improve appearance.
- The lids were also not staying closed throughout the morning. It would be helpful to have an employee responsible for monitoring this.

Lunch

Fries

Although it seems like the fries sell really well, I think the presentation could be changed in order to increase sales even more.

- The present packaging of the fries, onion rings, and fried zucchini consists of a paper cereal bowl. If it was real, nice bowl this would look okay, but since it is disposable,

paper bowls, it does not look very appealing. Perhaps the container could be switched to something more like an In-n-Out type fry container?

- The dishes are all disposable— is this to save money? It seems that it would improve the image of the food if it was served on real dishes.

Customers

Where are they going? What are they buying? Why?

Breakfast

There are definitely different groups of people that come through the café. There are those that want the hearty, hot breakfasts and then those that want something quick. Both the hot, made to order foods and the pre-packaged foods were selling very well. The grab-and-go packaged breakfast sandwiches and burritos seemed to sell especially well at the early part of breakfast when people were perhaps hurrying off to work and just wanting something quick.

The omelet station was very popular. There was always a line there. The hot cereals were also an item that several customers seemed to choose.

Lunch

There were long lines for the wrap and panini station. The salads were also going very quickly

Interaction between staff and customers

Breakfast/ Lunch

The staff seemed to be very friendly and open with the customers. The cashiers especially seem to have developed a good rapport with the customers

New product ideas

(based on what people are buying)

Breakfast

People seem to really like the omelet station- where it is personalized, with lots of options, and made to order. Perhaps this same concept could be expanded into different areas. One item that I think would lend itself very well to more options is pancakes. Offering different flavors or having a pancake of the day or week would be great. Or possibly even just offering seasonal, special pancake flavors could draw more customers (pumpkin for fall, blueberry in summer, etc.)

Lunch

I think that a nice addition would be fresh, hot rolls. I worked at a university food service café that was very similar to the Arbor Café in the food items sold. They had rolls that they brought in frozen, cooked in the ovens, and served fresh in the café. They always went quickly. Rolls would be a simple addition that could be added to many of the different entrees/salads sold and increase the amount customers are buying