

709 Braemar Road East
North Vancouver, BC V7N 4G1

April 12, 2023

Alexandria Lee
General Manager
Cactus Club Café Park Royal
West Vancouver, BC V7T 2Z3

Dear Ms. Lee,

To stay competitive in the restaurant industry and keep employee satisfaction up, Cactus Club Café must find a way to combat the decrease in customer volume it experiences annually during the months of January to April.

This report, *Increasing Customer Volume at Cactus Club Café During Dry Season Through the Introduction of Daily Specials*, investigates the feasibility of introducing daily specials from January to April and the benefit it may provide to company profits and worker compensation.

The data that informs this report was collected in two manners. First, survey data from residence of the lower mainland was obtained to analyze the factors that influence their restaurant choices. The importance of daily specials and if their introduction would increase customer's interest in dining at Cactus Club Café was also analyzed. Second, data was obtained from primary sources, such as Statistics Canada, to inform the decrease in customer volume experienced by the restaurant industry from January to April. Finally, the information provided during the interview you graciously agreed to participate in, was used to supplement the findings and conclusion derived from the data.

The data was analyzed and the recommendations for increasing customer volume through the introduction of daily specials is outlined in this report.

Thank you for the opportunity to investigate this issue and present the findings. Please feel free to contact me at parsaz00@students.ubc.ca if there are any questions or topics you would like to discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Parsa Seyed Zehtab', written over a large, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Parsa Seyed Zehtab

709 Braemar Road East
North Vancouver, BC V7N 4G1

April 12, 2023

Carl Dean
Executive Vice President
Cactus Club Café
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1E9

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The data was analyzed and the recommendations for increasing customer volume through the introduction of daily specials is outlined in this report.

Thank you for the opportunity to investigate this issue and present the findings. Please feel free to contact me at parsaz00@students.ubc.ca if there are any questions or topics you would like to discuss.

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Parsa Seyed Zehtab

**Increasing Customer Volume at Cactus Club Café During Dry Season Through the
Introduction of Daily Specials**

For

Alexandria Lee, General Manager Cactus Club Café Park Royal

and

Carl Dean, Executive Vice President Cactus Club Café.

By

Parsa Seyed Zehtab

ENGL 301 Student

University of British Columbia

April 12, 2023

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ABSTRACT

Restaurants experience fluctuating customer volume throughout the year. There are months with high customer volume and profits, and months with low customer volume and decreased profits. January to April are especially slow months for the restaurant industry, and these months are known as the “dry season”. Cactus Club Café is a prominent restaurant in British Columbia that also experiences dry season; not only do company profits drop, but server and bartender compensation from tips also decreases. As such, implementing a solution to increase customer volume during dry season is essential.

Introducing daily specials to entice customers to visit the restaurant is one such solution. This report analyzed the feasibility of introducing daily specials at Cactus Club Café through an analysis of data collected from surveys shared with residence of the lower mainland and other primary data sources. It was discovered that dry season is a well-established phenomenon experienced by the restaurant industry, and based on survey responses, daily specials hold significant promise to combating dry season.

Respondents to the survey agreed that introducing Daily Specials at Cactus Club Café would entice them to visit the restaurant more during dry season. They also shared that drink and appetizer specials were the ones they wanted the most.

Recommendations are provided, which include introducing daily drink and appetizer specials a pilot program, further investigating this issue through collecting data directly from Cactus Club Café customers and performing a cost-analysis report. Introducing daily specials will surely increase customer volume at Cactus Club Café, benefitting all its employees and the company.

INTRODUCTION

Definition of Dry Season

For the purposes of this report, dry season will refer to the downturn in customer volume experienced by most restaurants during the months of January to April. Likewise, it also encompasses the downturn in profits restaurants experience, and the decreased compensations from tips servers and bartenders experience.

Background on Cactus Club Café and Dry Season

Cactus Club Café is a Canadian-owned chain of premium casual restaurants that originated in North Vancouver, British Columbia in 1988. Since then, 31 locations have been opened across Canada, and it has been a staple location for residents of the lower mainland to dine at. The popularity of the restaurant is well established in the lower mainland, however, during the months of January to April, known as the dry season, the restaurant experiences a downturn in customer volume (Lee). According to the head manager of Cactus Club Café Park Royal, the restaurant experiences a downturn in profits during dry season, mainly due to decreased customer volume (Lee). Furthermore, Lee highlights that this downturn is experienced company wide. This in turn leads to decreased compensation for the servers and bartenders who work at the restaurant and rely on customer tips. Many factors have been proposed for the downturn in customer volume, including increased customer frugality following the holiday season (Lee).

Purpose of Report and Intended Audience

Based on a review of key research, data collected from residence of the lower mainland, and an interview with a general manager of a Cactus Club Cafe, this report assesses whether the introduction of daily specials during dry season will significantly increase customer volume, in turn leading to increased worker compensation and company profits. The primary audience for

this report will be Alexandria Lee, general manager at Cactus Club Café Park Royal, and Carl Dean, Executive Vice President of Cactus Club Café. This report covers 4 major topics: what factors influence customers' decisions when choosing a restaurant to dine at, how customer volume at restaurants fluctuates throughout the year, daily specials to increase customer volume at Cactus Club Café, and finally, the feasibility of introducing daily specials to increase customer volume during dry season. The report concludes by acknowledging the complexity behind the decrease in customer volume, and by recommending immediate implementation of daily specials from January to April to increase company profits and server/bartender compensation.

Method of Inquiry and Data Sources

The primary sources of data for this report are derived from an anonymous survey shared with residence of the Lower Mainland. The data obtained from this survey is supplemented through a literature review that includes examining statistics shared from Statistics Canada, and a fundamental report from the NIH on customer choices when choosing restaurants. Further, an interview was conducted with Alexandria Lee, General Manager at Cactus Club Café Park Royal, which provided industry knowledge on dry season and the feasibility of introducing daily specials to increase customer volume, company profits, and server/bartender compensation during dry season. The data from the anonymous survey was analyzed and compared against data obtained from Statistics Canada; the data obtained from the survey was further compared against information obtained from Alexandria Lee.

Scope of Inquiry

To form the driving motivation behind this report, the scope of inquiry was narrowed down to the following questions:

1. What causes customers to visit restaurants less during the months of January to April?
2. What causes customers to increase the frequency at which they dine at Cactus Club Café from May to December?
3. How important are daily specials in choosing a restaurant to dine at?
4. What factors drive the decision to choose a restaurant to dine at in general?
5. What is the feasibility of introducing daily specials at Cactus Club Café during dry season?
6. How will customer volume change after implementing daily specials?

DATA COLLECTED

Factors that Influence Customer Restaurant Choices

Customers have become more demanding in choosing better restaurant choices based on what they can get from their decision (Chua et al., 1). Figure 1 demonstrates the overall ranking of restaurant choice factors when choosing a restaurant to dine at, with 1 being the most important, and 9 being the least important.

Rank	Restaurant Choice Factors	Mean \pm Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
1	Price	3.798 \pm 2.558	0.588	-0.887
2	Word-of-mouth	4.588 \pm 2.692	0.168	-1.327
3	Personal/past experience	4.757 \pm 2.551	0.040	-1.173
4	Variety of menu items	4.811 \pm 2.442	0.172	-1.082
5	Popularity	4.811 \pm 2.363	0.076	-1.041
6	Reputation	4.839 \pm 2.402	0.018	-1.137
7	Location	5.182 \pm 2.604	-0.053	-1.283
8	Sales promotion	6.095 \pm 2.367	-0.497	-0.910
9	Online review from customers	6.115 \pm 2.426	-0.419	-0.942

1: "The most important criteria to consider when choosing a restaurant"; 9: "The least important criteria to consider when choosing a restaurant".

Figure 1. Criteria Considered When Choosing a Restaurant (Chua et al., 9).

As Figure 1 indicates, price is the most important factor for customers when choosing a restaurant to dine at. Sales promotion comes in at number eight. The above table demonstrates the nuance of introducing daily specials and their feasibility as a solution to increasing customer volume. On one hand, daily specials will decrease the price of some menu items, making them more appealing to customers. However, it is evident that sales promotions are themselves not as important of a factor when choosing a restaurant to dine at. These findings are further supported by the fact that price perceptions have a stronger influence on customer value perception than quality (Varki & Colgate, 233). The key point is the fact that it is price perception specifically that matters. As such, it is still feasible to assume that daily specials would be effective, as the customers perception of price will clearly be affected in a manner that positively benefits the restaurant; daily specials will indicate that the customer is saving money on menu items, increasing their value perception of dining out at that restaurant.

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Price	1.00	5.00	4.13	0.95	0.90	23
2	Quality of food	1.00	5.00	4.22	0.93	0.87	23
3	Location	1.00	5.00	3.04	0.86	0.74	23
4	Variety of menu options	1.00	5.00	2.43	1.10	1.20	23
5	Speed of service	1.00	5.00	2.86	1.01	1.03	22
6	Special deals/promotions	1.00	5.00	2.91	1.16	1.36	22

Figure 2. Factors Influencing Restaurant Choice: Lower Mainland Residents

Once again, price is one of the most important factors when choosing a restaurant, with the second highest mean rating (Figure 2). Special deals/promotions, however, wherein daily specials would fall, ranked fourth out of the six options (Figure 2). This does raise questions about the importance of daily specials, and their feasibility to increase customer volume. Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, daily specials inadvertently do affect price in a positive manner for a customer (lowering the price) and so it still stands that they may be an effective method to increase customer volume.

Monthly Customer Volume and Company Profit Fluctuations

As previously mentioned in this report, Cactus Club Café experiences a decrease in customer volume and company profits during dry season (Lee). Furthermore, this trend appears to hold true for not only all restaurants in British Columbia, but across Canada as a nation (Figure 3).

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)	Total, food services and drinking places												
	Unadjusted												
	Receipts												
	Seasonal adjustment	January 2022	February 2022	March 2022	April 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	August 2022	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022	December 2022
	Dollars												
Canada ³ (map)	4,509,541 ^A	5,297,947 ^A	6,496,222 ^A	6,667,252 ^A	7,332,583 ^A	7,605,557 ^A	7,866,210 ^A	7,793,005 ^A	7,544,196 ^A	7,460,709 ^A	6,971,201 ^A	7,462,562 ^A	6,796,019 ^A
Newfoundland and Labrador (map)	53,179 ^A	56,066 ^A	66,439 ^A	72,073 ^A	77,200 ^A	82,091 ^A	92,964 ^A	94,069 ^A	86,484 ^A	83,217 ^A	78,943 ^A	85,274 ^A	72,785 ^A
Prince Edward Island (map)	17,553 ^B	20,227 ^C	24,898 ^B	27,185 ^B	31,076 ^B	33,829 ^D	45,317 ^B	44,216 ^B	37,751 ^A	34,948 ^B	29,246 ^B	30,646 ^A	26,612 ^A
Nova Scotia (map)	106,387 ^A	119,094 ^A	149,465 ^C	154,758 ^A	166,736 ^A	171,900 ^A	193,251 ^A	196,172 ^A	181,706 ^A	183,962 ^A	165,795 ^A	172,389 ^A	153,194 ^A
New Brunswick (map)	75,204 ^B	87,213 ^C	106,807 ^A	112,426 ^A	117,924 ^A	121,030 ^A	134,855 ^A	136,409 ^A	127,574 ^A	123,747 ^A	116,251 ^A	119,318 ^A	106,817 ^A
Quebec (map)	738,680 ^A	982,018 ^A	1,224,428 ^A	1,302,251 ^A	1,457,289 ^A	1,527,603 ^A	1,562,556 ^A	1,524,031 ^A	1,469,569 ^A	1,445,938 ^A	1,358,760 ^A	1,469,570 ^A	1,257,034 ^A
Ontario (map)	1,641,119 ^A	2,005,696 ^A	2,523,000 ^A	2,563,445 ^A	2,860,403 ^A	2,976,917 ^A	3,010,441 ^A	3,003,927 ^A	2,935,512 ^A	2,968,730 ^A	2,775,397 ^A	2,943,497 ^A	2,690,116 ^A
Manitoba (map)	137,725 ^A	150,194 ^A	192,471 ^A	190,269 ^A	210,991 ^A	213,080 ^A	214,242 ^A	213,498 ^A	211,887 ^A	208,771 ^A	197,880 ^A	211,847 ^A	194,966 ^A
Saskatchewan (map)	139,178 ^A	147,844 ^A	171,689 ^A	175,408 ^A	193,206 ^A	194,504 ^B	199,948 ^A	196,994 ^A	192,570 ^A	192,274 ^A	181,162 ^A	192,596 ^A	180,792 ^A
Alberta (map)	669,697 ^A	724,147 ^A	863,821 ^A	853,955 ^A	931,842 ^A	952,952 ^A	1,007,454 ^A	969,301 ^A	958,801 ^A	926,328 ^A	870,367 ^A	940,092 ^A	876,990 ^A
British Columbia (map)	920,540 ^A	993,774 ^A	1,158,774 ^A	1,200,187 ^A	1,270,080 ^A	1,315,209 ^A	1,387,665 ^A	1,397,425 ^A	1,326,006 ^A	1,277,382 ^A	1,183,020 ^A	1,282,325 ^A	1,222,924 ^A
Yukon ³ (map)	5,190 ^A	5,909 ^A	7,258 ^A	7,794 ^A	8,041 ^D	8,769 ^A	8,976 ^A	8,778 ^A	8,269 ^A	7,527 ^A	7,099 ^A	7,388 ^A	F
Northwest Territories ³ (map)	4,026 ^A	4,660 ^A	5,822 ^A	5,918 ^A	6,044 ^E	6,014 ^A	6,780 ^A	6,400 ^A	6,304 ^A	6,090 ^A	5,636 ^A	5,955 ^A	5,448 ^B
Nunavut ³ (map)	1,064 ^A	1,104 ^A	1,349 ^A	1,583 ^A	F	1,659 ^A	1,763 ^A	1,786 ^A	1,763 ^A	1,794 ^A	F	F	F

Figure 3. Monthly Revenue, In CAD, For Food Service and Drinking Places from Statistics Canada. Table 21-10-0019-01 Monthly survey of food services and drinking places (x 1,000)

Looking at the rows for Canada and British Columbia, it is evident that compared to the months of May to December, there is around a 1 to 2 million CAD decrease in revenue during the months of January to April, with January and February facing the most significant drop

(Figure 3). There have been many reported reasons for this drop in revenue; Alexandria Lee has suggested that increased customer frugality following the holiday season is a contributing factor (Lee). Specifically, since customers tend to spend more money in December than they usually would during other months, especially when it comes to dining out, they try and compensate and save money following the holidays (Lee). Looking at the data from residents living in the lower mainland, it is evident that the frequency at which they dine out at restaurants matches the data in Figure 3.

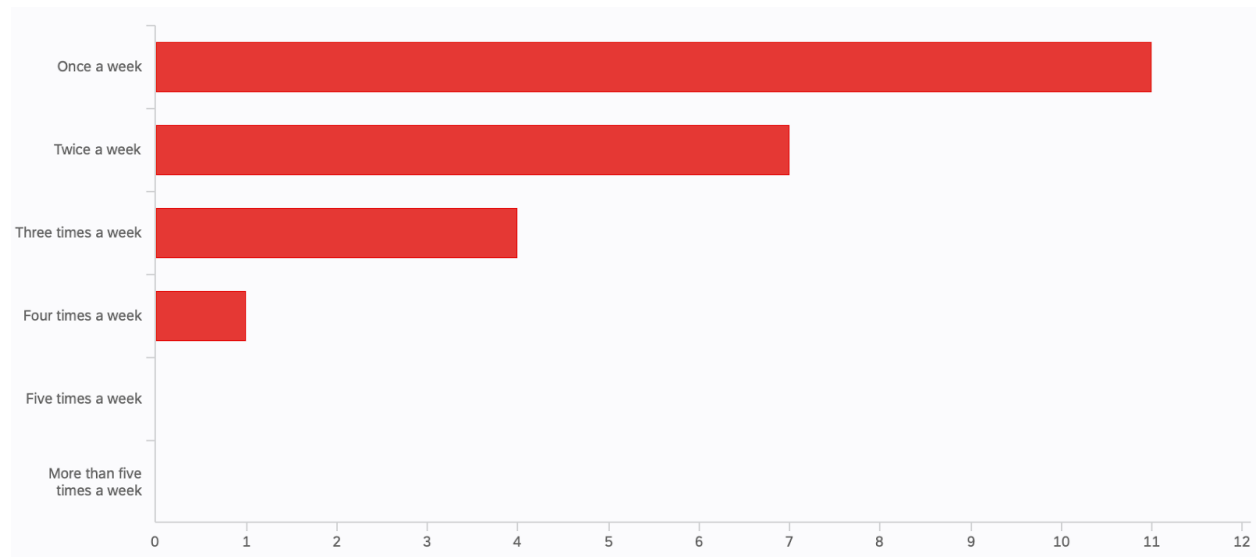


Figure 4. Average Restaurant Visits from May to December: Lower Mainland Residents

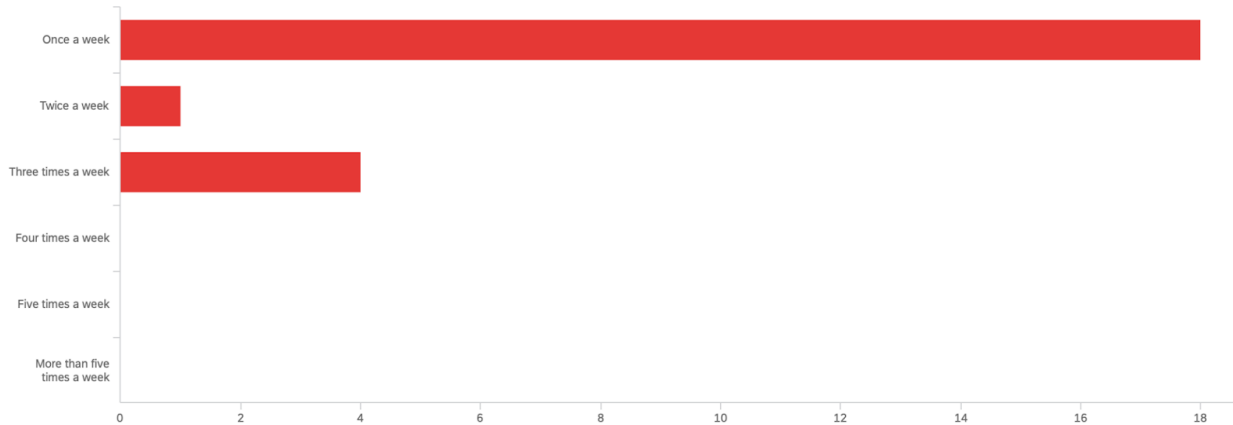


Figure 5. Average Restaurant Visits from January to April: Lower Mainland Residents

Although a small sample size, the data in Figures 4 and 5 provide insight into the decrease in customers profits during dry season, as demonstrated in Figure 3. Residents of the lower mainland clearly decrease their restaurant visiting frequency during dry season (Figure 5). Nearly 4 times the number of respondents visit restaurants twice a week outside of dry season (Figure 4, Figure 5). The data in these two figures is in line with the information shared by Alexandria Lee. From the data shared in this report, it is reasonable to imply the conclusion that dry season is a real issue negatively impacting company profit. Although this can, at most, be attributed to a correlation, it does appear that the decrease in restaurant visitation that customers engage in during dry season is a contributing factor to the decrease in revenue. However, as will be discussed in a later section of this report, a thorough and causal analysis between customer restaurant visitation frequency and decreased profits should be conducted to fully establish this as a driving force behind dry season.

Introduction of Daily Specials to Increase Customer Volume

Thus far, it has been well established in this report that the restaurant industry, Cactus Club Café included, experiences a downturn in customer volume and profits during dry season. As

previously mentioned, customer value perception is a significant factor driving their restaurant choice (Varki & Colgate, 233). As such, daily specials, which offer customers a means to save money while still getting to eat some of their favourite items, should increase their value perception of Cactus Club Café; ultimately, this should lead to increased customer volume and company profits during dry season.

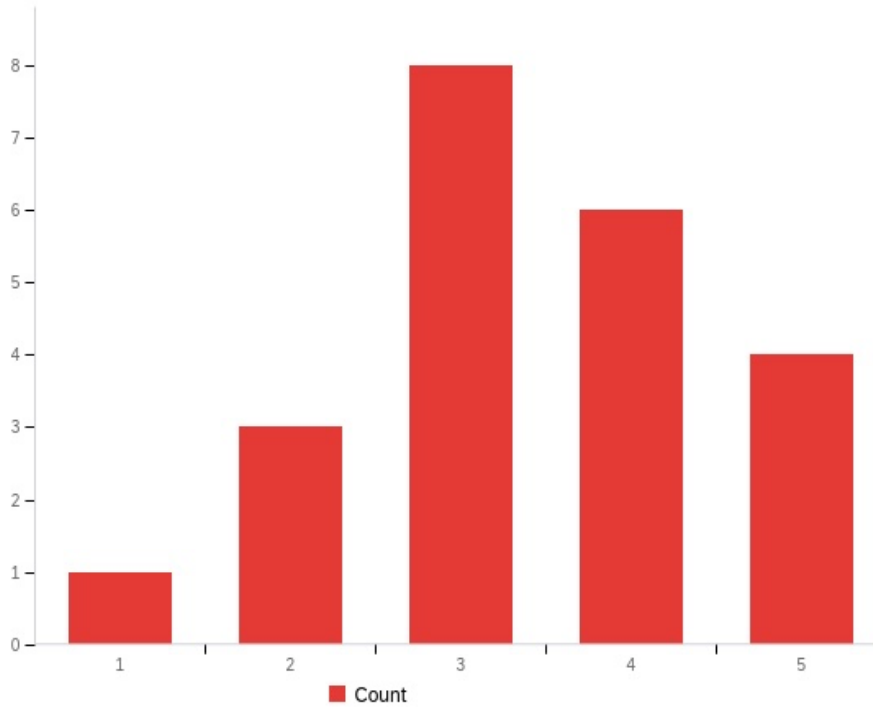


Figure 6. Respondent Rankings of Whether Introducing Daily Specials Will Make Restaurants More Appealing: Lower Mainland Residents. Ranked on 1-5 scale, with 5 being “very likely”.

Figure 6 demonstrates that lower mainland residents gave a 3.43/5 mean rating to the likelihood that the introduction of daily specials would increase the likelihood of them frequenting a restaurant (Figure 6). Evidently, there is a clear interest in daily specials and paired with the increase value perception they can offer, the feasibility of introducing them to increase customer volume at Cactus Club Café during dry season seems promising.

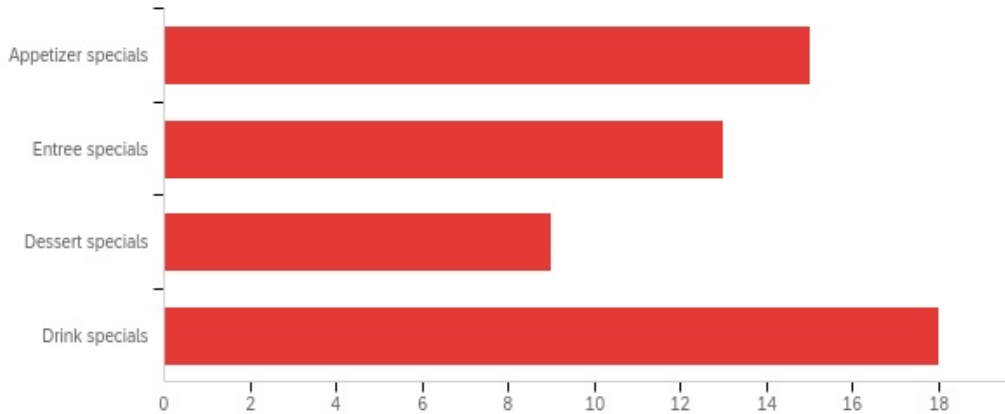


Figure 7. Types of Daily Specials Customers Would Want to Try: Lower Mainland Residents

Of the four main types of daily specials, introducing daily drink and appetizer specials hold the most promise to increase customer volume at Cactus Club Café. Of 23 respondents, 18 indicated that they would try drink specials and 15 indicated they would try appetizer specials (Figure 7).

Limitations

There are limitations that must be acknowledged in the current report. Firstly, the sample size of Lower Mainland residents who responded to the survey was small. This does raise questions about the validity and overall importance of the findings presented from this survey. Nevertheless, the data obtained from this survey is in line with the findings from studies done by Statistics Canada and the NIH, increasing the confidence in the results. Future reports should examine ways to increase the number of respondents to the survey, perhaps through incentivizing survey responses with monetary compensation. Moreover, the report would benefit from analyzing data specifically obtained from customers who visit Cactus Club Café, as the goal is to ultimately increase the frequency at which they visit the restaurant and increase overall customer volume. Current customers can provide valuable and specific information pertaining to Cactus Club Café, and so, are worth investigating.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

This report analyzed the potential of introducing daily specials at Cactus Club Café to increase customer volume during dry season when customer volume and company profits experience a downturn. Although the ebbs and flows of customer volume and company profits are an inevitable fact of the restaurant business, daily specials hold promise as a means to combat the decrease in company profits and server/bartender compensation. This report identified price as the most important factor for customers when choosing a restaurant to dine at. Although sales promotions, such as daily specials, ranked lower in the decision-making process, they do have an impact on customers price and value perception, making them a promising tool to increase customer volume.

This report also found that customer volume and profits across the Canadian restaurant industry, including Cactus Club Café, decrease during dry season. Increased frugality following holiday season spending was identified as one of the contributing factors. Lower mainland residents' survey responses supported this finding, as the survey results indicate that restaurant visitation frequency decreases during dry season.

Finally, this report found that daily specials are a potentially promising solution to increase customer volume and company profits during dry season. Lower Mainland residents expressed interest in daily specials, and the data indicates that daily specials can lead to increased restaurant visitation. This report found that drink and appetizer specials were especially appealing to customers. As such, they are the most promising specials to implement to increase customer volume during dry season.

Recommendations

Considering the data presented in this report, paired with the knowledge obtained from residence of the lower mainland, introducing daily specials as a means to increase customer volume, company profits, and server/bartender compensation does appear to be a promising solution. Although the effects of introducing daily specials cannot be fully quantified until implemented, this report has made clear that Cactus Club Café only stands to benefit from introducing daily specials during dry season. With this in mind, please consider the following recommendations:

1) Obtain Cactus Club Café Customer-Specific Data

Either use the current survey or modify it to fit the needs of Cactus Club Café customers and distribute it to Cactus Club Café patrons to assess their restaurant dining tendencies.

2) Introduce Daily Specials

Introduce daily drink and appetizer specials as a pilot program to increase customer volume during dry season and assess the effectiveness of daily specials.

3) Introduce Daily Specials

Having a rotating special menu (different drinks and appetizers for each day of the week) will keep customers interested and provide data on which specific menu items sell the most when they are on special. This will in turn inform which items to include in a permanent special rotation if/when daily specials are implemented during dry season.

4) Generate a Marketing Campaign

Creating a marketing campaign, through social media, for the introduction of the daily specials will increase the likelihood that customers know about the deals and visit Cactus Club Café.

5) Cost-Analysis Report

Once the daily specials have been introduced for the duration of a dry season, generating a cost analysis report will inform the company as to whether the daily specials increased customer volume, if they increased it in a cost-effective manner, and the feasibility of continuing the daily specials program in future years.

Dry season is an inevitable fact of the restaurant industry, and action must be taken to increase company profits and worker compensation. Implementing daily specials is a step in the right direction to solving this issue, and this report has made it clear the benefit this program will provide Cactus Club Café and its employees.

APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

Link To Survey: https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0q4aGcJrsnk4FRc

APPENDIX B

Alexandria Lee Interview Questions

1. What factors do you think drive the decrease in customer volume during the months of January to April?
2. What are the negative impacts of dry season on the restaurant and restaurant staff?
3. Do you think introducing daily specials would be feasible for our restaurant?
4. Do you think introducing daily specials would increase customer volume during dry season?
5. How would daily specials impact our restaurant's menu planning and inventory management?
6. Would introducing daily specials require additional kitchen staff or resources?
7. How would you determine what daily specials to offer?
8. How would you promote the daily specials to customers?
9. How would you track the success of the daily specials?
10. Have you introduced daily specials at this restaurant or another restaurant before? If so, what was the impact on customer volume and revenue?
11. How would introducing daily specials affect the pricing strategy for our menu?
12. Would introducing daily specials require changes to our existing restaurant procedures, such as ordering or prep processes?
13. What timeline would you propose for introducing daily specials to our menu?

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