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RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF WORD-OF-MOUTH ON LOCAL CAFÉ PATRONAGE FOR CAPPUCCINO DRINKS IN NASUGBU: BASIS FOR A REFERRAL MARKETING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of word-of-mouth on local café patronage for cappuccino drinks in Nasugbu and Lian, Batangas, as a basis for developing a referral marketing program. Specifically, it investigated how word-of-mouth increases customers' knowledge of available cappuccino products, enhances recognition of local cafés, reduces unawareness, encourages product trial, strengthens purchase intention through trust in recommendations, and promotes repeat visits. The study employed a descriptive-correlational research design involving 50 customers from selected local cafés. The findings were analyzed using weighted means and Pearson product-moment correlation. Results showed that word-of-mouth received favorable assessments across all dimensions. Reducing unawareness due to the lack of recommendations obtained the highest composite mean of 3.92, followed by recognition of local cafés at 3.82. Encouraging trial of cappuccino drinks received a mean of 3.68, while strengthening purchase intention obtained 3.62. Knowledge of available cappuccino products had a mean of 3.54, and promoting repeat visits obtained 3.53. However, the correlation analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between word-of-

mouth and purchasing decisions and repeat visits ($r = -0.142$, $p = 0.325$). Based on these findings, a referral marketing program was proposed, incorporating customer referrals, social media sharing, authentic customer reviews, product-trial incentives, and loyalty activities. The study recommends using word-of-mouth as part of a broader marketing strategy rather than relying on it as the sole means of increasing café patronage.

Keywords: *word-of-mouth, café patronage, cappuccino drinks, purchasing decisions, repeat visits, referral marketing*

INTRODUCTION

The coffee industry has become an important part of the food and beverage market, with local cafés offering products and experiences that attract customers. Cappuccino drinks are among the beverages offered by cafés to customers seeking coffee quality, a comfortable atmosphere, and satisfying service. As competition among cafés increases, local businesses need practical and cost-effective ways to introduce their products, attract customers, and encourage repeat visits.

One marketing approach used by businesses is word-of-mouth (WOM), which occurs when people share information, opinions, experiences, and recommendations about products or services with others. Customers may learn about cappuccino drinks through friends, family members, acquaintances, and online reviews. Such recommendations can help potential customers discover café menus, become familiar with local establishments, and decide whether to try a particular product.

For local cafés in Nasugbu and Lian, Batangas, word-of-mouth can be a useful way to reach customers through personal connections and online communication. Positive customer experiences may encourage recommendations, while unfavorable experiences may affect how

potential customers view a café. Social media and online reviews also allow customers to share their experiences with a wider audience.

However, favorable recommendations do not necessarily guarantee that customers will purchase a product or revisit a café. Their decisions may also depend on product quality, price, service, atmosphere, accessibility, and promotional activities. It is therefore important to examine customers' perceptions of word-of-mouth and determine whether a statistically significant relationship exists between word-of-mouth and purchasing decisions and repeat visits.

In this regard, the study examines the impact of word-of-mouth on local café patronage for cappuccino drinks in Nasugbu and Lian, Batangas. Its findings serve as the basis for proposing a referral marketing program that may help local cafés improve product awareness, strengthen recognition, encourage trial purchases, and support customer retention.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Word-of-Mouth and Consumer Behavior

Word-of-mouth is a form of communication through which consumers share their experiences and recommendations about products and services. Customers may rely on these experiences when they are unfamiliar with a product or business. In the café industry, recommendations can provide information about cappuccino drinks, product quality, service, and the overall customer experience.

The reviewed literature in the thesis, including Robledo et al. (2022), discusses the continued importance of word-of-mouth and its development through digital communication. Online reviews and social media posts allow customers to share their opinions beyond their immediate social circles. These communications can influence how consumers learn about and evaluate local cafés.

Word-of-Mouth and Knowledge of Cappuccino Products

Recommendations can help customers learn about available products and compare different options. In the context of cappuccino drinks, customers may discover menu choices, variations, and product information through conversations and online reviews. The thesis discusses Robledo et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2023) in relation to how word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth provide information that consumers may use when evaluating products.

For local cafés, sharing accurate menu information and encouraging customers to discuss their experiences may help potential patrons become more familiar with available cappuccino products.

Word-of-Mouth and Recognition of Local Cafés

Recognition refers to customers' ability to identify and remember a business. Recommendations from friends, family, and other customers may increase familiarity with a café and its offerings. The thesis cites Zhao et al. (2023) and Rachmawati and Harsoyo (2024) when discussing the contribution of word-of-mouth and online communication to business visibility and recognition.

For local cafés, customers' recommendations, shared photos, and online feedback may help introduce the establishment to people who have not visited it before.

Word-of-Mouth and Consumer Unawareness

Potential customers may remain unaware of a café because they have limited information about its location, menu, or products. Word-of-mouth may help reduce this information gap by allowing existing customers to share their experiences and recommendations. The thesis discusses Bahadir and Pauwels (2023) and Rimiyati and Anisa

(2024) in connection with the role of interpersonal and online communication in increasing consumer awareness.

This suggests that local cafés may benefit from encouraging customers to share accurate information about their cappuccino offerings and overall experiences.

Word-of-Mouth, Purchase Intention, and Product Trial

Recommendations may encourage consumers to try products they have not purchased before. Customers may feel more confident when information comes from people whose experiences they trust. The thesis reviews studies on word-of-mouth, electronic word-of-mouth, and purchase intention, including Erkan and Evans (2020), Ismagilova et al. (2020), and Pangaribuan et al. (2020).

For cappuccino products, customer recommendations may generate interest and encourage trial. Nevertheless, the decision to purchase may also depend on the product's taste, price, availability, and the customer's personal preferences.

Word-of-Mouth and Repeat Visits

Repeat visits are important to the continued patronage of local cafés. Positive customer experiences and trusted recommendations may encourage customers to return. The thesis discusses Rosario et al. (2021), Nuseir (2020), and Filieri et al. (2021) in relation to online feedback, trust, and consumer intentions.

However, repeat visits cannot be attributed to word-of-mouth alone. Product quality, customer service, price, atmosphere, accessibility, and loyalty activities may also affect whether customers return.

Synthesis of the Reviewed Literature

The literature reviewed in the thesis presents word-of-mouth as a potential source of product information, café recognition, consumer trust, and purchase interest. Both personal recommendations and online feedback may help local cafés reach potential customers. At the same time, the study's results show the importance of testing the relationship between customers' perceptions of word-of-mouth and their reported purchasing decisions and repeat visits rather than assuming that a strong perception automatically establishes a significant statistical relationship.

The present study addresses this issue by examining word-of-mouth in the context of cappuccino drinks offered by local cafés in Nasugbu and Lian, Batangas. Its findings are used to formulate a referral marketing program suited to the study's results.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to examine the impact of word-of-mouth on local café patronage for cappuccino drinks in Nasugbu and Lian, Batangas, as a basis for a referral marketing program.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the impact of word-of-mouth on local café patronage for cappuccino drinks in terms of:
    1.1 increasing knowledge of available cappuccino products;
    1.2 enhancing recognition of local cafés; and
    1.3 reducing the effect of unawareness due to a lack of recommendations?
2. What is the impact of word-of-mouth on customer purchasing decisions and repeat visits in terms of:
    2.1 encouraging trial of cappuccino drinks;

2.2 strengthening purchase intention through trust in recommendations; and

2.3 promoting repeat visits to local cafés?

Is there a significant relationship between the impact of word-of-mouth on café patronage and the purchasing decisions and repeat visits of the respondents?

What marketing plan may be developed based on the results of the study?

Hypothesis

Null hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant relationship between word-of-mouth marketing and customer patronage in local cafés.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used a descriptive-correlational research design. The descriptive component was intended to determine respondents' assessments of word-of-mouth in terms of product knowledge, café recognition, unawareness, product trial, purchase intention, and repeat visits. The correlational component was used to test whether a statistically significant relationship existed between word-of-mouth and customers' purchasing decisions and repeat visits.

Locale of the Study

The study covered selected local cafés in Nasugbu and Lian, Batangas. These locations were selected because the research focused on customers who purchase or have experience with cappuccino drinks from local cafés in the identified areas.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents consisted of 50 customers from selected local cafés in Nasugbu and Lian who had purchased or experienced buying cappuccino drinks. They were the target

participants because their experiences and exposure to recommendations could provide information relevant to the research objectives.

The thesis identifies purposive sampling in its data-gathering procedures. This means respondents were selected based on their relevance to the study's focus.

Research Instrument

The thesis describes a questionnaire with statements about the impact of word-of-mouth on café patronage and purchasing decisions. Respondents rated the statements using a four-point scale:

4 – Strongly Agree

3 – Agree

2 – Disagree

1 – Strongly Disagree

The document also discusses semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and an observational checklist in the methodology chapter. Because the results chapter presents questionnaire-based weighted means and correlation analysis, the final manuscript should clearly state which instruments were actually administered and used in the analysis.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The methodology chapter describes obtaining permission from café owners or managers, informing participants about the purpose of the research, and collecting responses from eligible café customers. It also states that participation should be voluntary and that respondents' information should be treated confidentially.

The final thesis should report the procedures that were actually completed, including the instrument used, the dates of data collection, and how responses were recorded and checked.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The thesis reports the use of the following statistical tools:

Weighted mean – to summarize respondents' ratings for each dimension of word-of-mouth and café patronage.

Standard deviation – to describe the variation in respondents' ratings.

Pearson product-moment correlation – to examine the relationship between word-of-mouth and purchasing decisions and repeat visits.

0.05 level of significance – to determine whether the observed correlation was statistically significant.

The results were interpreted according to the verbal interpretations presented in the thesis.

FINDINGS

The findings below are based on the summary of results in the uploaded thesis.

1. Impact of Word-of-Mouth on Local Café Patronage

Knowledge of available cappuccino products. The composite mean was **3.54**, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. This indicates that respondents generally perceived word-of-mouth as helpful in providing information about café menus and available cappuccino products.

Recognition of local cafés. The composite mean was **3.82**, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. This suggests that recommendations and shared customer experiences helped respondents become familiar with local cafés and recognize establishments in their area.

Reduction of unawareness due to a lack of recommendations. This dimension received the highest composite mean of **3.92**, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. The result indicates that respondents viewed word-of-mouth as helpful in discovering cafés they might not have previously known.

2. Impact on Purchasing Decisions and Repeat Visits

Encouraging trial of cappuccino drinks. The composite mean was **3.68**, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. Respondents generally agreed that recommendations may encourage customers to try cappuccino drinks.

Strengthening purchase intention through trust in recommendations. The composite mean was **3.62**, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. This suggests that respondents considered recommendations from other people when deciding whether to purchase cappuccino drinks.

Promoting repeat visits to local cafés. The composite mean was **3.53**, interpreted as *Strongly Agree*. Respondents generally perceived positive word-of-mouth and favorable café experiences as helpful in encouraging repeat visits.

3. Relationship Between Word-of-Mouth and Purchasing Decisions and Repeat Visits

The Pearson correlation analysis produced a correlation coefficient of $\mathbf{r = -0.142}$ and a p-value of **0.325**. Because the p-value was greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the relationship was **not statistically significant**. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Although respondents gave favorable ratings to the word-of-mouth indicators, the statistical test did not establish a significant relationship between word-of-mouth and purchasing decisions and repeat visits in this sample.

4. Proposed Referral Marketing Program

Based on the findings, the thesis proposed a referral marketing program with the following strategies:

Cappuccino information sharing: Publish menus, product descriptions, and information about available cappuccino options.

Local café awareness campaign: Encourage customers to share café experiences, photos, and recommendations.

Customer referral program: Use referral cards or digital referral codes to encourage customers to introduce cafés to friends and family.

Cappuccino trial incentives: Consider introductory offers or limited promotions to encourage first-time purchases.

Authentic customer reviews: Encourage honest reviews and respond professionally to customer feedback.

Referral and loyalty activities: Consider loyalty points, repeat-purchase rewards, and referral incentives.

Integrated marketing: Combine word-of-mouth with product quality, customer service, pricing, social media promotion, and other marketing activities.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

Respondents generally perceived word-of-mouth as helpful in increasing knowledge of available cappuccino products, enhancing recognition of local cafés, and reducing unawareness caused by a lack of recommendations.

Respondents generally agreed that word-of-mouth may encourage customers to try cappuccino drinks, strengthen purchase intention through trusted recommendations, and promote repeat visits to local cafés.

The study did not establish a statistically significant relationship between word-of-mouth and purchasing decisions and repeat visits. The correlation coefficient of −0.142 and p-value of 0.325 indicate that the relationship was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Favorable perceptions of word-of-mouth do not, by themselves, establish that it is significantly associated with purchasing decisions and repeat visits. Other factors, including product quality, customer service, price, café atmosphere, accessibility, and promotional activities, may also be relevant.

A referral marketing program may be developed to help local cafés improve awareness, encourage product trial, build customer engagement, and support retention. However, word-of-mouth should form part of a broader marketing strategy rather than serve as the sole promotional approach.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

Maintain quality products and customer experiences. Café owners and managers should strive to provide consistently prepared cappuccino drinks and satisfactory service that may encourage customers to share positive experiences.

Strengthen customer referrals and social media visibility. Local cafés may share accurate menu information, new cappuccino offerings, and authentic customer experiences on suitable social media platforms. Referral cards or digital referral codes may be used to encourage existing customers to introduce the café to new patrons.

Encourage first-time product trials. Café owners may consider introductory discounts, limited-time offers, or referral incentives to encourage customers to try cappuccino drinks. The effectiveness and cost of these activities should be monitored.

Develop customer loyalty activities. Loyalty points, repeat-purchase rewards, and referral incentives may be used to encourage continued engagement. Cafés should also invite honest reviews and respond professionally to feedback.

Use a broader marketing approach. Since the relationship between word-of-mouth and purchasing decisions and repeat visits was not statistically significant, cafés should not depend on word-of-mouth alone. They may combine referrals with product quality, customer service, competitive pricing, social media promotion, and customer loyalty activities.

Evaluate the proposed marketing program. Café owners may monitor referral use, first-time visits, repeat purchases, customer feedback, and promotional costs to assess whether the program is meeting its objectives.

Improve future research. Future researchers may use a larger sample, clearly document the sampling process and data-gathering instruments, and examine additional factors that may be associated with café patronage. Further research may also compare different types of cafés, locations, or beverage products.

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