# Exploratory Study of Customer's Perception towards Specially Abled Servers

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*Abstract— The study aims to assess the customers' perception towards the service provided by the specially-abled servers in a restaurant. The restaurant in Kathmandu where specially-abled servers were working was selected purposively. The sample size of the study was 100 numbers of customers who were selected randomly during the restaurant hours of operation. This exploratory research purposes to enrich the hospitality literature by identifying the customers' perception towards the specially-abled servers during their dining experience in a restaurant. The self-administered questionnaire was used to collect the data for the study. The result revealed that the majority of customers (88%) were interested in specially-abled servers and had no trouble placing their orders. The service rendered by the specially-abled server was rated as excellent by 79% of the customers. 89% of the customers reported that their dining experience was a good value. 90% of the customers were likely to recommend the restaurant to a friend and other people. The sample was limited to a restaurant in Kathmandu. The study reports the positive perception of customers towards the service provided by the specially-abled servers in a restaurant. It is important to acknowledge businesses that are interested in social causes, whether they are restaurants or other types of businesses.  The study findings are of special significance to hospitality researchers and executives. In Nepal, the government should equip the specially-abled workforce and integrate them into the economy as prosperous citizens, active consumers, employees, and contributors to society.*
*Keywords— Exploratory Study, Specially-abled, Customer's perception, Restaurant server, Hospitality.*

## I.    INTRODUCTION

Any physical or mental disorder (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to perform certain tasks (activity limitation) and communicate with the world around them is referred to as a disability [1]. Someone who is 'specially abled' or 'differently abled' has skills that are different from those of the average citizen. It's an umbrella word that can refer to a wide range of disabilities, including blindness, amputees, wheelchair users, one eyed, deaf, dumb, half-dumb, feeble, crippled, lame, limping, handless or mentally handicapped person [2]. In a nutshell, it's a different way of describing someone who is disabled or handicapped.

A variety of scientific methods are used to investigate the major ties between employment, health, and disability. Any of the research looks at how poverty affects people with disabilities' job growth and jobs opportunities. A reciprocal relationship has been identified between disability and poverty, which is aggravated by high rates of unemployment and underemployment among people with disabilities [3].

Despite national and international agencies' initiatives and support aimed at lifting people out of extreme poverty based on country-specific needs, there is still a lack of a comprehensive policy focused on people with disabilities and their families, who are among the most disadvantaged minority groups. Poverty among people with disabilities remains one of the world's most difficult problems. Disability and poverty are closely connected, and disabled people in developing countries are largely invisible in mainstream society [4].

In low-income countries like Nepal, people with disabilities face more problems and disadvantages than people without disabilities. School is more challenging, a dream job can be out of reach, and there is social stigma too. People with disabilities can face numerous challenges in the workplace. The prevalence of disability in Nepal was 1.94% in 2011. The distribution by type of disability data reports that 36.3% disability was physical, 18.5% was visual, 15.5% was hearing, 11.5% was speech, 1.8% was deaf-blind, 6% was mental, 2.9% was intellectual, and 7.5% was multiple disabilities [5].

Significant employers in Nepal have already shown the advantages of recruiting disabled people. The Bakery Café employs many people with hearing disabilities as waiters; Deurali Janata Pharmaceuticals employs many people with hearing disabilities as employees; Kathmandu Model Hospital employs people with visual disability as telephone operators; and Tribhuwan International Airport employs people with visual impairment and wheelchair users. Other examples include the I/NGOs and banking industries, as well as Baje Ko Sekuwa, Bhat Bhateni Super

Market, and Hotel Hardik. They've also employed people with a variety of disabilities in various roles [6].

The majority of people with disabilities do not have access to adequate health care services. There are few restaurants in Kathmandu such as Bakery Café and Sam's One Tree Café, that have played a significant social role by employing people with disabilities as servers [7]. The servers are specially trained to take customer's order on notepaper or tablets. To be a part of the team, the other member takes a course in sign language or another form of communication. This exploratory study aims to enrich the hospitality literature by assessing the customers' perception towards the service provided by the specially-abled servers their dining experience in a restaurant of Kathmandu.

## II.     METHOD

The cross-sectional study employed an exploratory research design to access the customers' perception towards the service provided by the specially-abled servers in a restaurant. The exploratory research is the study of a topic that has not previously been examined or fully investigated. It is typically performed to get a deeper understanding of the issue at hand, but it seldom produces a definitive result. It is used to learn more about a current phenomenon and gain new insights into it in order to formulate a more specific problem [8].

In 2011, 1.94% (513,321) of the total population of Nepal reported having "some kind of disability," according to the Census [9]. After earthquakes in 2015, many people were assumed to be temporarily or permanently disabled through crush or other injuries. The population of the specially-abled servers in a city was unknown.

The study was conducted in a restaurant of Kathmandu from Oct-Nov 2017 during restaurant hours of operation. The restaurant in Kathmandu mostly employs specially-abled waiting staff. The restaurant, where specially-abled servers were working, was selected purposively. The total capacity of the restaurant at a peak time was 150 customers. The unit of analysis of the study was individual. The sample size of the study was 100 numbers of customers who were selected randomly during the study period.

The questionnaire survey was used as a research instrument to get the information from the participants. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part related to the demographical background of the respondents. The second part was based on the factors influencing the customer's perception. The statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, and correlation analysis were used to analyze the data.

The pilot study was initiated with 18 individuals. Many of the participants in the pilot study came from a number of backgrounds, but they have all visited a restaurant, where specially-abled servers were employed, at least once. The questionnaire was analyzed to determine whether the data collected helped the researcher in meeting the objectives of the study by testing the reliability of the questionnaire. Cronbach's coefficient of reliability was 0.67 and found adequate for questionnaire survey.

## III.     RESULT AND DISCUSSION
### 3.1 Characteristics of the Respondents

There were 56% of male and 44% of female customers visiting the restaurant. The maximum and minimum age of customers during survey period were 42 and 18 years respectively. 14% of the customers belong to the age group 18-22 years, 20% to 23-27, 23% to 28-32, 21% to 33-37, and 22% customers were from the age group 38-42 years.

*Table 1: Characteristics of the respondents*

| Characteristics | Category | % |
|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 56% |
| | Female | 44% |
| Age (years) | 18-22 | 14% |
| | 23-27 | 20% |
| | 28-32 | 23% |
| | 33-37 | 21% |
| | 38-42 | 22% |
| Occupation | Service | 40% |
| | Business | 32% |
| | Student | 17% |
| | Other | 11% |
| Frequency of visit | First time | 22% |
| | Everyday | 33% |
| | Frequently | 19% |
| | Occasionally | 16% |
| | Rarely | 10% |
| Way to place order | Writing in the notepaper | 65% |
| | Using a tablet | 35% |
| Time taken to place the order | Less than expected | 20% |
| | Reasonable time | 57% |
| | Longer than expected | 23% |
| Difficult to place order | Agree | 12% |
| | Disagree | 88% |

The occupation of most of the customers (40%) were service, 32% of them involved in business, 17% of visitors were students and 11% of the customers were doing other job.

Out of these 100 customers, 22% visited for the first time, 33% visited everyday for lunch, 19% visited frequently, 16% visited occasionally, and 10% visited rarely. The servers bring menu card before placing the order. The means of taking order were writing in the notepaper and using a tablet. The customers reported that 65% of the specially-abled servers noted order of food in the notepaper and 35% of them took order using a tablet.

The table 1 represents that 20% of customers reported that their order were placed less than the time they have

expected, 57% of them believed order was taken in reasonable time, and 23% of customers stated that it took longer time to place order.

The customers (12%) mentioned that they have faced difficulty while placing the order with the specially-abled servers but majority (88%) of the customers were interested with specially-abled servers and did not face problem while placing the order.

## 3.2 Respondents' Perception towards Specially-abled servers

*Table 2: Respondents' Perception towards Specially-abled servers*

| SN | Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Skill of Server** | | | | | | | |
| 1 | The seating arrangement was good. | 0% | 9% | 39% | 50% | 2% | 3.5 | 0.69 |
| 2 | A server was there to take our order quickly. | 0% | 2% | 10% | 64% | 24% | 4.1 | 0.64 |
| 3 | The server used assistive technology. | 0% | 5% | 46% | 48% | 1% | 3.5 | 0.61 |
| 4 | The server coordinated the timing of the courses perfectly. | 0% | 1% | 25% | 72% | 2% | 3.8 | 0.50 |
| 5 | The staff was well trained. | 0% | 1% | 20% | 65% | 14% | 3.9 | 0.61 |
| 6 | The staff made effort to handle our special requests. | 0% | 0% | 7% | 63% | 30% | 4.2 | 0.57 |
| | **Behavior of Server** | | | | | | | |
| 7 | The server was friendly and patient when taking our order. | 0% | 1% | 26% | 65% | 8% | 3.8 | 0.59 |
| 8 | The server was able to answer all our questions. | 0% | 1% | 11% | 70% | 18% | 4.1 | 0.58 |
| 9 | The server had good understanding ability. | 0% | 0% | 8% | 55% | 37% | 4.3 | 0.61 |
| 10 | The staff was clean and well dressed. | 0% | 10% | 65% | 25% | 0% | 3.2 | 0.58 |
| | **Customer's Perception** | | | | | | | |
| 11 | Overall, the service was excellent. | 0% | 1% | 20% | 67% | 12% | 3.9 | 0.59 |
| 12 | Our dining experience was a good value. | 0% | 1% | 10% | 66% | 23% | 4.1 | 0.60 |
| 13 | I would recommend the restaurant to the friend. | 0% | 1% | 9% | 79% | 11% | 4.0 | 0.49 |

*1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree*

Table 2 displays how respondents felt about specially-abled servers in terms of their abilities and behavior. To get absolute consensus for the answer, the percentages of strongly accepted and agreed upon responses were added in table 2. The majority (> 50%) of respondents felt that the capacity of a specially-abled server was very significant in determining whether or not to visit the restaurant. 52% of respondents agreed that the seating arrangements were fine, 88% agreed with fast service, 49% agreed with the use of assistive technology, 74% agreed with time and scheduling, 79% agreed that the staff were trained, and 93% agreed that the server was qualified and well trained to handle the customers.

Just 25% of respondents agreed that the staff was clean and well dressed, while 73% said the server was polite and patient when taking orders, 88% said the server was able to answer their questions, and 92% said the servers had good understanding abilities. The customer's perception towards the service provided by the specially-abled servers was found to be positive. 79% of the customer believed the overall service was excellent. The higher percentage of customers (89%) mentioned their dining experience was good. Finally, 90% of the customers decided to recommend the restaurant that hires specially qualified servers to their friends and others.

*Table 3: Correlation Coefficients between the variables*

| SN | Variables | Overall, the service was excellent. | Our dining experience was a good value. | I would recommend the restaurant to a friend. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Skill of Server** | | | |
| 1 | The seating arrangement was good. | 0.46 | 0.54 | 0.39 |
| 2 | A server was there to take our order quickly. | 0.5 | 0.62 | 0.38 |
| 3 | The server used assistive technology. | 0.63 | 0.61 | 0.47 |
| 4 | The server coordinated the timing of the courses perfectly. | 0.46 | 0.33 | 0.41 |
| 5 | The staff was well trained. | 0.39 | 0.38 | 0.37 |
| 6 | The staff made effort to handle our special requests. | 0.52 | 0.43 | 0.44 |
| | **Behavior of Server** | | | |
| 7 | The server was friendly and patient when taking our order. | 0.41 | 0.46 | 0.35 |
| 8 | The server answered all of our questions in an understandable manner. | 0.69 | 0.74 | 0.61 |
| 9 | The server had good understanding ability. | 0.47 | 0.47 | 0.44 |
| 10 | The staff is clean and well dressed. | 0.43 | 0.36 | 0.43 |
| | **Customer's Perception** | | | |
| 11 | Overall, the service was excellent. | 1 | 0.57 | 0.73 |
| 12 | Our dining experience was a good value. | 0.57 | 1 | 0.55 |
| 13 | I would recommend the restaurant to the friend and other people. | 0.73 | 0.55 | 1 |

The correlation coefficients between the thirteen variables in table 3 were found to be significant at the 5% level. The dependent variable, customer's perception, was measured by three variables a) overall, the service was excellent, b) Our dining experience was a good value, and c) I would recommend the restaurant to the friend and other people. The variables from 1 to 10 represent the specially-abled servers' skill and behavior. The independent variables from 1 to 10 were significantly correlated at 5% level with the dependent variable as shown in table 3. The determinant score was calculated as 0.001 > 0.00001which shows there is absence of multicollinearity among the variables. The present cross-sectional study used non-probability sampling method to select the sample and hence regression analysis could not be used to determine the cause and effect relationship among independent and dependent variables.

The overall customer perception of the service offered by the specially-abled servers in the restaurant was positive (85%), with only a small percentage (15%) of the customer perception being negative. Persons with disabilities are often excluded from work sectors despite having a great deal of capability and ability. Many hurdles prohibit them from entering the job market and cause them to live in poverty. Unfriendly physical infrastructure, accommodation, communication, and a lack of expertise and ideas among employers to address the special needs of persons with disabilities in the workplace, as well as employers' low trust in the ability and competitiveness of persons with disabilities, are the key obstacles that hold them out of the mainstream labor market and employment field. However, excluding workers from the productive sector or market is not only a social problem, but also a major economic loss for the country [6].

## IV.    CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to assess the customers' perception towards the service provided by the specially-abled servers in a restaurant of Kathmandu. The majority of customers (88%) were interested in specially-abled servers and had no trouble placing their orders, according to the results. 79% of customers thought the service provided by the specially trained server was outstanding. The dining experience was rated as a good value by 89% of customers. 90% of customers said they would recommend the restaurant to a friend and others. Customers in a restaurant have a favorable view of the service rendered by specially-abled servers, according to the analysis.

It is important to acknowledge businesses that are interested in social causes, whether they are restaurants or other types of businesses. It will assist specially-abled people in maintaining their jobs, but most importantly, it will show that specially-abled servers are just as effective and competent as anybody else. The findings of this study could serve as a baseline for future research, which could include probability sampling and a larger sample size to look at other related constructs.

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