

PERFORMANCE IN SERVICES MARKETING. THE CASE OF TWO OF THE WORLD'S BEST RESTAURANTS

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Abstract: *Worldwide, there is a consistent increasing tendency of the predominance of services for GDP growth, as they are the main contributor. Thus, one cannot deny the majority of white collars over blue collars. Whilst products have tangible assets on which consumers can judge and decide what is better for them, dealing with services imply the prevalence of soft variables. Combining services with the base of Maslow's pyramid, there is no denying the fact that the art of crafting food and the way an individual feels this basic process, thus, enhanced through the experience of dining, is critical. In an activity where the quality of the services provided play a decisive role in the success of a business, restaurants' management needs to know learn from the best practices examples in the field, track their activity and never quit their desideratum of reaching greatness through client satisfaction. The purposes of this paper are to provide an overview of the situation of the first two of the world's best restaurants and to present the role played by services marketing in their performance. Our research is based on a literature analysis.*

Keywords: *services marketing, restaurant, performance, El Celler de Can Roca, Osteria Francescana.*

JEL Classification: *M10, M31, M39.*

1. Introduction

Companies in all fields of activity aim at satisfying customers, understanding that profits are generated by them. It is a matter of understanding the context and the variables and it is up to “their” abilities the extent to which they manage to achieve their goals. The economic environment thrusts towards efficacy, efficiency and gaining a “sustainable competitive advantage” (Ranjith, 2016, p.2013). These concepts are related to performance but for restaurants, it is about a mix of components so specific and subtle, “that in addition to providing fine cuisine, more attention is attached to service quality” (Cheng et al., 2012, p.1156). Now, the eyes are turning towards “perceived performance (e.g. service, food, beverage, facilities, and atmospherics) influence” customer behavior in terms of recurrence” (Peng and Chen, 2015, pp.180-181), thus making it much more difficult for an entrepreneur to juggle with such soft variables. In such an environment, applying “logic for creating and capturing value, and also its approach to constant renewal” (Svejenova, Planellas and Vives, 2010, p.409) is the key for success.

Considering passion as “the main driver behind chefs’ commitment” (Surlemont et al., 2005, p.289), understanding that clients’ “both gustatory and metaphorical taste are about the immediacy of pleasure or displeasure attending experience” (Lane, 2013, p.41), integrating “their cuisine perfectly with the restaurant’s atmosphere is a critical aspect of customers’ perceptions of chefs’ innovativeness and creativity” (Liu et al., 2015, p.579).

In an economy of experience, the responsibility of services marketing is to transform a particular place into a scene where customers become an audience to your food show.

2. Performance: the case of two of the world’s top restaurants

The relevance, importance given by food critics, notoriety and stringency that World’s Best 50 Restaurants list has nowadays, stands a testimony of great performance in their field of activity for those that manage to reach its peak. Osteria Francescana is voted and validated as the leader in the industry, followed by last year’s former winner, El Celler

de Can Roca. Given this incontestable vote of trust from the experts, these restaurants serve as examples of best practices in the field. Taking into account that customers are the focal point of businesses, the volatility of the markets and a current shift in business practices towards creating an unforgettable experience, besides relevant performance metrics such as cash flow, percentage of repeat customers, staff turnover and other field specific economic indicators (break-even point, food cost percentage, gross profit, etc.), a company that provides services and activates in the hospitality industry should also (and it is of utmost importance) measure its performance from a services marketing point of view. It is essential to understand the services marketing components and other elements that both define and contribute to achieving performance for the first two of the world's restaurants (Table no. 1-7).

Table no.1. Place: an important element in achieving performance for the first two of the world's restaurants

Name of element	El Celler de Can Roca	Osteria Francescana
Place	<p>- Girona, Catalonia, Spain, a gastronomy-oriented country. The three brothers that own the restaurant are proud of their origins/birthplace (the same as the restaurant's placement). The restaurant itself surpasses the traditional barriers, being described through their vision as a style of living.</p> <p>- They have multiple locations (or "planets of the Roca Universe" [VI]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bar restaurant Can Roca: the restaurant from the parents (carretera de Taialà, 42 - 17007 Girona), • Mas Marroch: space for celebrations (Mas Marroch - 17180 Vilablareix), • Roca Barcelona: Roca Moo, one michelin star gastronomic restaurant, and Roca Bar, the lobby bar of hotel Omm (Rosselló 265 - 08008 Barcelona), • Rocambolesc: artisan ice cream (Santa Clara 50 - 17001 Girona), • La Masia (I+R): farmhouse they co-opted to become a research / training centre [VII] 	<p>- Modena, Emilia-Romagna, Italy, a gastronomy-oriented country, especially the region. It is the region that defined Massimo Bottura's "taste".</p> <p>- They have a main location placed on Via Stella 22, Modena, Italia and a cousin, Franceschetta 58 (strada Vignolese 58, 41124 Modena): a lighter, more informal version of the above mentioned gourmet restaurant [XXII]</p>

Both restaurants are situated in places that have a great tradition in gastronomy and whose inhabitants respect the gastronomical culture.

Table no. 2. People: an important element in achieving performance for the first two of the world’s restaurants

Name of element	El Celler de Can Roca	Osteria Francescana
People	<p>- Owners: The iconic figures of Joan Roca (head chef), Josep (sommelier), Jordi (pastry chef). They promote work specialization and highly developed skills specific for their field of interest. They influence the restaurant’s activity through their experience (achieved through their work in the field and by experiencing new cultures, scenery/countries, people that are leaders in their field – not always gastronomy related). In 1989, Joan spent a season at now-shuttered El Bulli, which greatly informed his creative thinking. [XXXI]</p> <p>- Employees: Use staff from around the world [IV]. The owners live among their employees and spend time together. For example, they serve lunch daily at their mother’s house (approximately 200 meters away from the restaurant). The owners offer therapy to restaurant’s staff conducted through weekly sessions by Inma Puig, a therapist specialized in “teamwork morale” [V]. The need emerged because “a kitchen has high temperature and a lot of people working at high speed” [Puig, I., XV].</p> <p>- Customers: They expect innovation and come for a daring experience.</p>	<p>- Owner: A vanguard in the food revolution, Massimo Bottura. He cooks food as a tribute to his birthplace, family and art, all these ingredients being the subject of transformation and creation of his unceasing mind. His is “the first Italian restaurant to be named the world’s best”. [XXXVIII]</p> <p>- Employees: The owner lives among his employees and spend time together, eating, playing soccer [XVIII] or going weddings [XI]. They have small team compared to other top restaurants (10 chefs) [XXXIV].</p> <p>- Customers: according to the owner, his clientele is divided into two main categories: the ones that want to live and enjoy an experience but ordering “à la carte” are the people that follow the Michelin Guide. They usually choose a couple of bottles from the wine list. On the opposite side, the clients that follow the 50 Best Restaurant list want to live the experience permitting the waiter/chef choose whatever he considers, not even opening the menu.</p>

An important element refers to the fact that people (the owner(s), employees and customers) relate to and aim at high quality, regarding the business unit as a family unit.

Table no. 3. Products: an important element in achieving performance

Name of element	El Celler de Can Roca	Osteria Francescana
Products (Cuisine specifics of the region)	<p>- Xuixo pastries, botifarra sausage, salsifies and wild mushrooms, cured meats, Ratafia (liqueur) [II]. Famous dishes: Paella, fried milk (“leche frita”), gazpacho (or salmorejo, a tomato soup).</p>	<p>- Parmesan cheese (Parmiggiano Reggiano), balsamic vinegar (Aceto Balsamico di Modena), prosciutto (crudo and cotto), salame, tortellini (in brodo) and tortelloni, pasta (Bolognese / ragu – Bologna is also part of Emilia-Romagna). Famous dishes: “zampone” or “cotechino modena” [III, X] – part of</p>

		the New Year's traditional dinner (together with lentil – that symbolizes good luck for the upcoming year / fortune, money).
Products (Restaurant's specific dishes and other products)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus on products of the region, respecting tradition yet creating avant-garde dishes. - Lobster parmentier with black trumpets – a tribute to “the clients that remain faithful to El Celler over its history” [XXXI]. Another signature dish is deconstructed Palamós prawn, a dish that embodies a modern twist on a combination of two traditional Spanish and Catalan dishes. - They also sell books (where they provide some of their recipes), perfumes and courses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Particular focus on the traditional products of the region and managing to create revolutionizing modern dishes. - Dishes usually tell a story, it's chapters being comprised of it's name and visual stimulus. Some pay tribute to certain people (e.g. Artists such as Damien Hirst - “Beautiful, Psychedelic Spin-painted Veal, Not Flame Grilled”, Ai WeiWei - “Oops! I Dropped the Lemon Tart”) [XXX] - Clients can also choose to buy products such as their signature artisanal balsamic vinegars and extra virgin olive oils. - Another product sold is the book Massimo Battura wrote, entitled “Never Trust a Skinny Italian Chef” stating “I wrote the book like I cook. I wrote a million things, and then cut them to their essence. It says everything I wanted to say.” [XX]

The products promoted have a strong visual impact, respect the tradition of the region, are meticulously created and usually have a strong symbolism incorporated.

Table no. 4. Products and services: important elements in achieving performance

Name of element	El Celler de Can Roca	Osteria Francescana
Products and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Products combined with the services provided tell a story and create a unique experience (they often use nostalgia in their activity – business conduct, dishes), thus creating an indefinite lasting memory. - Their products fit into the category of haute cuisine after two of the brothers (Joan and Josep) dined at Pic (Valencia). - They create avant-garde cuisine, placing “familiar tastes in unfamiliar forms” [XVII] - Some products are deceitful and created in such a way as to induce the idea to the consumer that he is about to eat a particular dish and what he tastes in reality is something different, thus creating a 	<p>Products combined with the services provided tell a story (often regarding nostalgia in a critical yet constructive manner in order to achieve a great execution) and create a unique experience.</p>

	<p>wonder effect.</p> <p>- They change the story told through food by using variables such as the seasonable change of nature and when a dish finishes naturally. New dishes undertake a process of testing and, when they pass and their creative process is accepted as done, they move onto the permanent menu.</p>	
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The way products are created and served, every process created is incorporated in such a way as to create an exceptional, unique experience.

Table no. 5. Services: an important element in achieving performance

Name of element	El Celler de Can Roca	Osteria Francescana
Services	Online reservations are made via their own website – bookings are accepted for as long as eleven months in advance, and each new month becomes available for reservations on the 1 st day of the month, at midnight. Due to the fact that it is hard to find an available date, a customer usually has to wait for, waiters explain the dish.	Online reservations are made via their own website – Bookings begin three and a half months in advance, on the 1 st of the month at 10 a.m. local time. [XXII]

Clients seek the services of the two restaurants with such devotion that it is hard to find an open spot. Reservations are made in advance.

Table 6. Promotion and communication: important elements in achieving performance

Name of element	El Celler de Can Roca	Osteria Francescana
Price	Average cost: €165-€195	Average cost: €180-€200
Promotion and communication	<p>- Stakeholder direct communication: interviews conducted with specialists (food critics), clients, researchers and they involve in projects aimed at improving both their cuisine and the industry, in general. Such a venture is represented by the world they take together with BBVA bank, promoting best practices in world gastronomic destinations (innovation, responsibility, etc.). They were also part of a project conducted by BBC (World News), Collaboration Culture, where Jordi worked side to side with Gaston Acurio, a chef and ambassador of the Peruvian cuisine.</p>	<p>- Stakeholder direct communication: interviews with food critics, press, suppliers, customers. He is dedicated to “finding, supporting and promoting artisan producers and local products”. [XXXVI] He keeps in touch with the local community, supporting local industry efforts.</p> <p>- The restaurant has online covering through its own website, social media account and other specialized websites.</p> <p>- Massimo also partakes in different projects, such as the Universal Exposition in Milan where he is „bringing all the best chefs in the world to cook with the leftovers from the other pavilions”.</p>

	- They also tell the story they have created through by using the online environment (their own website, blog and social media accounts and other specialized websites)	[XXXVIII]
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The owners of both restaurants are focused on the way society perceives high-quality gastronomy and communicate directly with stakeholders. Their activities have a global reach and impact.

Table no. 7. Other relevant elements that contribute to achieving performance for

Name of element	El Celler de Can Roca	Osteria Francescana
Fidelity policy	They do not aim at reputation to attract customers, but making everything for the customer's satisfaction. This is what drives them to return.	High quality of execution and creativity inserted in their products.
How they define success	"Family, work, health, hospitality and generosity." (Juan Roca, 2016) [XXXI]	When he was 18 years old (1980), he defined his culinary success when "he would use a megaphone to call out to his friends on the beach near Salerno from the camp where they were staying and ask what they wanted for dinner: carbonara or amatriciana?" [XXXV]
Core know-how	Owner's minds: Juan (salt mind), Josep (liquid mind) and Jordi (sweet mind). They are also called „three heads and one hat" [XXXI]	Owner's mind: Massimo's brain called "Emilia-Romagna", also his secret ingredient. [XIII]
Other intangibles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Culture, tradition and memories are key intangibles that define the brother's cooking. - Recognition: Three Michelin Stars since 2009 - Passion for cooking born (since childhood) from within the family: mother and grandmother. Josep used to help the waiters and was in charge with "refilling the wine bottles at Can Roca's basement cellar" [Roca, J. as cited in XII] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Culture, situations that make up a good story. - Recognition: Three Michelin Stars since 2011 - Passion for cooking born (since childhood) from within the family: mother, grandmother, aunt and older brothers. It was also born from a "land of fast cars and slow food": where Lamborghini, Ferrari and Maserati are made [VIII, X]. His French technique was developed under Alain Ducasse, the famous Monégasque chef, and "the molecular gastronomy he took from his mentor, Ferran Adrià". [XXXVII]
Physical evidence that help create the experience	The classic tangible components specific for a dinner table are unique and especially created in such a way as to stimulate the „feel" of the dishes served. For example, an amuse bouche (an appetizer that is traditionally free, served strictly based on the chef's	The restaurant portrays a significant number of works of art hanging on the walls. The dining area the design is simple, usually using a restricted number of predominant colors in mild tones (a combination between white, light blue, gray and dark brown – the wooden ceiling in the

	<p>choice and has the purpose of stimulating the appetite) is presented in the form of a bonsai tree. These tangibles may be described as simple yet complex because they help contour the experience in a synergistic manner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The restaurant has huge glass panels and a secluded garden.	<p>dining area). The plates are simple, usually white, acting as a canvas for the food (the actual art).</p>
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All tangibles and intangibles convert towards creating a gastronomical synergy, an exceptional dining experience.

Based on the tables above and the fact that Osteria Franciscana is currently ranked as being the most important restaurant in the world in 2016 according to The World's 50 Best Restaurants list, some elements emerge as key success factors (and create a recipe for success) that paved the road for Osteria in achieving high performance and differentiation. They are formulated as a set of rules, as following [I, VIII, IX, XIII, XVIII, XIV, XXI, XXIII, XXV, XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII, XXIV]:

- Break every single day the gastronomical past (tradition), respect and rebuild it using a contemporary mind

- Become a laboratory of ideas that are inspired by knowledge through culture

- Be conscious when using the poetry of creativity

- Highlight intellectual gestures in creating recipes using ingredients, technique and memory, thus compressing them into a dish that are bites of edible culture with your passions as flavor (the magnificent three: food, music – Massimo uses his obscure reflections that come out of his creative process, jazz being both about unique improvisation and technical execution [XXIII, XXV, XXVI], art – he transposes in his dishes the ideology of Joseph Beuys, art being an essential communication metaphor for humans [XXIII, XIV], his food being the canvas of the extraordinary artistic Pablo Picasso [XXVIII] that has a story to say, bringing “together confluences of talent” [XXVII] within each dish – Gertrude Stein [XXV]) . Creating a recipe is an intellectual act!

- Your motivational force should be art as it is the highest point of human thought

- Your ideas should be edible in a way that they would not only encompass technique but paint in abstract slow passages of time

- Live the moment, be absorbed in it but never forget the past and it's origin. It is like driving a car: through your windshield you see the future and through your rearview mirror - the past

- Use the best elements from around the world but always catch the spirit of the origin where you belong from. Use the expression of the area where you live!

- The most important ingredient you can use is your mind

- Maintain tradition in evolution

- Renew tradition! Both respect (preserve) the “grandmother's recipe” and also renew it!

- Using simple, plain, basic products may create astonishing dishes rather than using exquisite ingredients. Sometimes, a potato is better than a truffle!

- Make your customers think only about the food and how they can enjoy it!

- Impress with your palette of taste, satisfy the taste buds first, then the mind. Use reality, concreteness, actual quality to tell a story! Make it taste, look and feel a certain way!

- You can take out from traditional dishes the most important parts (usually emotional parts, what you loved to eat first out of a dish when you were a child) and use them into recreating that specific dish just relying on those attributes. Even play around with perfection (such as lasagna)!

- Give value to the artisans (the cheese makers, farmers etc.) by creating star dishes

- Understand your clientele!

- Think fast but do it slowly!

- Employees must interpret and know what you are thinking!

- Necessity may be the mother of invention!

- Your restaurant becomes your child!

- Love your staff!

- Cooking requires patience and time (also regarding the aging of the ingredients you use)!

- Rebuild imperfection in a perfect way (as in the case of the “Oops! I’ve dropped the lemon tart!” when one of their pastry chefs, Takahiko “Taka” Kondo was preparing two lemon tarts and one fell on the table breaking both the tart and the plate) [XIX, XVIII]

- Use the sense of playfulness, irony, and unexpectedness!

- Create iconic dishes!

- Don’t take yourself too seriously! Have a little irony, a laugh about yourself!

- Bring the best part from the past into the future!

- Look at the world from under the table (from a critical point of view, not a nostalgic one)! Just as he did in his childhood, growing up under the kitchen table, escaping his older brothers. He felt safe and found „peace at his grandmother’s feet as she rolled out the dough for tortellini”. [XXI]

- The surface of things is not enough, reach their core! [XXIX]

- Have an intimidating work ethic!

3. Conclusion

Achieving performance in services marketing is a formula of success specific to each business unit. Judging from the lessons learned from the two best restaurants in the worlds, Osteria Franceseana and El Celler de Can Roca, we can say that it is about a mixture of elements such as favorable placement (originating in cuisine traditionalist countries), a rich offer of avant-garde products (and traditional ones with a modern twist) and a great quality price ratio, a leadership that identifies itself with the restaurant (workplace), that do not sell but live their business. All these create an appetizing mix that attract customers and surpass expectations, creating unforgettable moments.

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