Customer Dissatisfaction!

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In the retail or service industry, it is not necessarily just the product that gives us pleasure. The attitude of the providers can also make a huge difference in consumer satisfaction. If you go into a shop and find the shop assistants aloof and unhelpful, it may make you less inclined to buy anything or if they are over friendly and constantly hovering over you it can be off putting. In a restaurant if the waiters are not courteous or make you feel like they are doing you a favour by serving you, then it can spoil the enjoyment of the meal however good the food might be.

Obviously there are many cases where the customer or client can be difficult, nit picking, demanding and downright rude but it does show the quality of a business or store when they are able to deal with this with ease. Some follow the train of thought 'the customer is always right' and others I found out first hand, do not.

To give you an example, early in July, after months of drab and dreary days and cold and miserable nights, we finally seemed to be getting a bit of much needed sunshine. Winter had overstayed its welcome and I think we skipped spring altogether. The weather outside was idyllic and the vitamin D deprived population was out in full force, soaking up the sun, enjoying the warm balmy breeze and we were no different.

For residents of the UK one thing that is never a given is the weather (hence the ability of Brits to talk and moan incessantly about it). So people firmly believe in making the most of it while it lasts. In fact the saying 'Make hay while the sun shines' can almost be taken in the literal sense. Now that summer was officially here, we had to take full advantage of our good fortune. It is a lucrative time for cafes and restaurants as people flock to the ones that have outside dining or seating.

We decided on that particularly lovely day to go on a drive into the countryside and take in the quintessentially English rolling hills and fields and stop for a bite to eat at a quaint but very pretty restaurant. The food was average but what it lacked in gastronomic quality was compensated for by our picturesque surroundings. When the dessert menu was proffered to us, none of us could resist. My eldest daughter opted for the passion fruit sorbet. Given the heat it seemed like a sensible choice. A few minutes later the waitress appeared with our food and placed a bowl of suspiciously orange looking sorbet in front of my daughter. She took a spoonful and then asked me to taste it.

"What does that taste like?" she asked me.

"Mango," I said having sampled the orange dessert.

"Exactly!" was her response.

The sorbet was definitively not passion fruit flavour. Being a self professed mangoholic, I can put my hand on my heart and say without a shadow of a doubt that it was mango sorbet. We beckoned to the waitress and very politely told her that there must have been a mistake and we had been given mango sorbet and not passion fruit. She looked at us and said that it was definitely passion fruit as the mango sorbet was not as orange in colour. After we suggested once again that there might have been a mistake, she took it back and said she would check with the kitchen. She reappeared within a few minutes and told us that the chefs had tasted it and were in agreement that it was passion fruit and not mango as the mango sorbet had been finished earlier that day. All I can say is that the only person/people to confuse the two would have to be those who had never tasted either of the two fruits, or had their taste buds surgically removed.

My daughter and I decided that it was pointless getting into an argument and trying to explain to her that being Bangladeshi, we really did know a thing or two about mangoes. My daughter then opted for the blood orange sorbet fervently hoping that it would not come disguised as water melon! Obviously the staff had not been initiated into the 'the customer is always right' school of thought.

What I tend to do like many other people is stay loyal to service providers or shops and restaurants where I feel they actually care about the customer. Call it a symbiotic relationship — they look after me and I am more than happy to be a regular customer. Needless to say we will not be going back to this particular restaurant.

Another similar experience I had recently was at a well established and famous department store where the sales assistant was hell bent on proving me wrong.