

CHAPTER-3

Need, Objectives, Scope & Limitations

This chapter highlights the most important reasons for conducting the research. It comprises of the need of the study, description of the objectives undertaken to carry on the proposed research based on the literature review and research gap. It also includes in detail the scope and limitations of the study.

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into four major sections. The need of the study in the current context of an economically emerging country like India is explained in the first section. In the following portion of this chapter, Section 3.3 establishes the research objectives of the work. Section 3.4 covers the scope of the study. Lastly, Section 3.4 lists some constraints that have been brought up during the investigation by way of limitations.

3.2. Need for the Study

In our everyday lives, sound has an essential existence. No matter wherever we go be it home, streets, or park, we are surrounded by sound. It is observed after extensive literature review that the majority of studies on practical approaches concentrate their conclusions about the impacts of sound on physical sound parameters, such as sound pressure levels. Even if it is a realistic metric for environmental standards, the ability to perceive sound remains an important factor in determining how well an acoustic environment is evaluated overall (Marry & Defrance, 2013). A comprehensive understanding of soundscapes could lead to better living conditions. Decision-makers such as urban planners and legislators should consider soundscape elements in implementing the acoustic projects for a better experience.

We are all exposed to different urban sounds. Since people naturally hear things without realizing it, this sense is frequently used to enhance their entire sensory experience. Marketers have been successful in stimulating our subconscious and influencing our thoughts, opinions, and behaviours through a variety of means, such as the jingle of a radio station (Meyers-Levy, Bublitx & Peracchio, 2010). Marketers can also influence consumer behaviour by using sound to push individuals through decision-making processes or alter their perceptions of the products or services that are being offered to them (Hartmoyer, 2022). Sound is an often-overlooked aesthetic structure, despite being a crucial design component in architectural environments committed to consumption, like restaurants (Lang, 2014).

Furthermore, eating out of the house is becoming more and more popular worldwide, especially in Asian nations (Steffens & Weinzierl, 2023; Din et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). It is also quite evident in the literature that restaurant sound creates a huge impact

in diners' overall experience (Tarlao et al., 2021; Steffens et al., 2021). Therefore, it is vital to comprehend how people perceive the sound levels in restaurants, level of loudness in restaurants and whether or not these perceptions, when combined with other elements of the restaurant servicescape, affect patrons' overall satisfaction.

It is imperative to study music in restaurants from the point of view of the customer as they are the main recipient of the soundscape. As Rohrmann (2012) points out, soundscapes in restaurants indicate that the management usually makes general decisions about the intended soundscape in the cafe or restaurant, but actually do not execute them on a daily basis. It seems that both content and level of the music played are often based on staff rather than customer preferences. This is not surprising, given that staff and customers have rather different aims and motivation. Periodically checking the perceived soundscape quality and adopting corrective measures to meet customer needs and expectation have the potential of helping the restaurateurs to increase their overall likings among the diners. As research indicates, music is the most popular service offering, ranked by consumers even higher than low prices (Kubacki et al., 2007); another study shows that customers are willing to pay more for meals in restaurants with live music (Lane, 1990). It has been also demonstrated that music significantly lowers boredom, which encourages people to eat and drink more and stay longer than they had planned (Ramdan & Kusumawardhana, 2010). The significance of music in restaurants and specially increasing use of live music in restaurants lead to the comparison of live music with pre-recorded music in shaping the experience of the diners (Čustović, 2021).

These indicate that effect of music on behavioural responses and on diners' experiences need to be examined in greater detail. Additionally, culinary tourism is growing in popularity as a means of balancing development and sustainability as well as for financial benefit (Ranteallo & Andilolo, 2017). In particular, the rise in the opening up of ethnic restaurants in every corner promises to provide an authentic experience to its diners. Further research in this area is encouraged by examining this issue from the perspective of ethnic music in ethnic restaurants.

As said earlier, restaurants are a vital component of social interactions. Restaurants, however, frequently have a lot of background noise, which makes it difficult to communicate clearly. Diners' social interactions, communication, and acoustic comfort preferences are negatively impacted when they are exposed to an unsatisfactory sound

environment (Spence, 2014; Syed & Yilmazer, 2023). Some people find loud restaurant noise to be intolerable at times (Fink, 2024). Noise comes from different sources. Managers or restaurateurs cannot fully control situational sounds, but they can be lessened when a proactive service approach is used. Proactive customer service enhances customer satisfaction by foreseeing service faults and taking preventative measures, as opposed to responding after a failure. Thus, it makes sense to research how noise affects diners' experiences in order to identify the cause, intensity of noise and implement preventive measures. Furthermore, studies for various geographic areas can be found, however, there is a paucity of studies on noise and dining experience in restaurants from the Indian environment in general and Assam in particular (Refer to Section 2.6). Consequently, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the whole soundscape of a restaurant, it is imperative to comprehend how patrons in Assam perceive and are sensitive to noise. This can affect the overall dining experience in the restaurant. A detailed analysis will help the marketers in understanding the sources of noise, their levels, and their management, and the entire soundscape. In order to address the above issues, this study aims to achieve the following objectives.

3.3. Research Objectives

As evident from the research gap and need for the study, it is decided to carry forward the study with the following research objectives:

- 1) To determine the role of music in diner experience.

Objective 1 proposes to identify the role of music played in the restaurant in overall diners' experience. Role of live music in creating a positive customer experience is explored as a part of this objective. A comparison is also made between live and pre-recorded music on diners' experience. The role of ethnic music in diners' experience is also being assessed as a part of this objective.

- 2) To measure the effect of noise in the restaurant on visitor's experience.

Through this objective, the impact of noise in overall satisfaction of diners are determined. An attempt is also made to find out if music can play some role in noise avoidance as a part of this objective.

3.4. Scope of the Study

Scope determines the coverage of the study. It includes the geographic scope and academic scope of the study.

3.4.1. Geographic Scope- The area of study is Assam which is a state with 3.12 crore residents (Assam Population Census, 2011) having ample scope for commercial establishments. Assam has tremendous commercial importance and an important state in the entire North East India. The diverse state of Assam contributes significantly to the varied cultural and economic environment of the nation. As part of India, one of the fastest-growing emerging economies in the world, Assam is witnessing rapid urbanization and economic development, particularly in its service and hospitality sectors (Asian Development Bank, 2021). Assam's restaurant business serves a rising population with changing tastes affected by both local heritage and global exposure, showcasing a rich combination of modern and traditional culinary trends. This blend of contemporary dining practices with traditional cuisines provides a fertile ground for research into dining experience with respect to restaurant soundscape and consumer behaviour. Understanding these aspects within Assam's restaurant industry not only highlights regional trends but also offers insights into the broader Indian market, making it an essential area for study in the context of emerging economies.

Keeping these things in mind, at first, two Focus Group Discussions have been arranged, one with participants from Guwahati and another one with participants from Tezpur. The survey is conducted in the 7 Urban Agglomeration destinations of the General Administrative Divisions of Assam viz; Tezpur, Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Silchar, Nagaon, and Jorhat. Urban population is considered because the diners who are required for the study are presumed to have a higher level of income, more exposure to different eateries, and a willingness to pay for leisure activities than their rural counterparts. The experiment is conducted in three Urban agglomerates out of the 6 places i.e., Guwahati, Tezpur and Jorhat. Only these three places have been selected because of the reason that the ethnic restaurants which have been chosen for the study are present in at least two destinations. The table below shows the ethnic restaurants in Guwahati, Tezpur and Jorhat.

3.4.2. Academic Scope- Diners in this study are those customers who have visited the restaurants for eating out. This study considers family restaurants, premium casual dining restaurants as well as fine dining restaurants. For the purpose of this study the term ‘restaurant’ includes family restaurants serving (options) minimum 3-course meals to its guests. For the purpose of the study, music includes pre-recorded (background music, foreground music, and ethnic music) and live music. Therefore, the music played in the particular restaurant is considered for the study.

3.4.3. Time Scope- The time frame for the study is extended from July, 2018 to December, 2024. The Focus Group Discussion was carried out which works as a foundation for the study, after that a survey is carried out extensively. Along with these, an experiment is also conducted within this time frame.

3.5. Limitations

Even though every attempt was made to produce the best study feasible for the subject matter and to minimize constraints, there nevertheless existed possible limitations with how the research was conducted:

- 1) As a part of the study, survey has been conducted in restaurants serving three course meals and excluded other types of restaurants such as pub, cafe, themed restaurants etc. This might create certain limitations in generalisation of the findings into these eateries.
- 2) There is lack of availability of statistical and census data on food and beverage industry since 2011. Even though a few government websites and marketing agencies provide certain information but they are very limited in number and the authenticity of such data is also sometimes questionable.
- 3) The majority of the respondents in our study encountered a setting where live music was not present. But the same may not be true for other cities and diners’ preferences. These may not exactly be represented by this study population
- 4) The experiment was exclusively conducted in ten ethnic restaurants of three place viz; Guwahati, Tezpur and Jorhat. Experiment was neither conducted for all the varied ethnic restaurants nor it was on large group of subjects. The perception of the customers regarding the impact of ethnic food and ethnic music may differ at other ethnic restaurants and restaurants located in different regions, and the

physical environment and the quality offered are also different in other places and thus, the findings may not be generalised.

- 5) For triangulation only, a limited number of variables used in the three approaches could be used for integration.
- 6) For the experiment, it was not conducted with the same participants for both the Intervention Group and the Control Group. Therefore, care has been taken to choose the participants with a similar demographic profile, and exceptional cases have been avoided by following the lottery parameters.

Despite the aforementioned potential weaknesses, this research demonstrates a sincere attempt to advance the field of study, enhance the industry's marketing strategy, and find new ways to incorporate this tried-and-true but innovative approach into their daily operations of restaurants.