Qualitative Research Task

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Consumer/Buyer Behavior

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**Section 1:** Restaurant Selection

 For this task, I have selected two restaurants from downtown Philadelphia. The first is a small Indian/ Pakistani /Halal fusion restaurant called Mood Café. The second is Morimoto, a Japanese restaurant named after world famous Chef Masaharu Morimoto, owned by him and popular restaurateur Steven Starr. These are two very different restaurants, both of which I have been to. Mood Café is small, at the corner of 46th st. and Baltimore Ave. in Philadelphia, PA, but it is one of the only restaurants in Philadelphia that maintain a 5-star rating on Yelp.com. You can leave full and happy spending less than $10 per person, but if you really want the full experience you spend $13 (to get the Lassi, a popular Indian yogurt beverage). On a nice day the line can be a whole block long at lunch and dinner times, filled with people of all walks of life looking for a tasty meal. The most important drawing factor to this restaurant is the owner, he is very engaged and refuses let you pay until after you enjoy your chaat, their one food item that can be made upwards of 30 different ways. Morimoto is very different from Mood Café, it is an upscale Japanese restaurant in center city, located at 5th and Walnut streets. They offer a la carte items as well as a chefs tasting option that they call omakase. The chefs choice omakase costs; $120, $150, or up per person and they also offer a beverage omakase costing $65 or $85 per person, separate from that they offer a sake omakase which is $85 per person.

**Section 2:** Reviews – All from Yelp.com NOTE: Yelp only counts reviews as credible if the person writing them has received up-votes from other members, this prevents people from bashing restaurants because of unrelated reasons.

 **Mood Café**: Mood Café holds a 5-star rating on yelp.com with 191 reviews, something only 3 other restaurants in the city have done. Of the ten reviews I have chosen seven of them all say the same thing, giving the restaurant 5-stars and saying how engaged and involved the owner is and how amazing the chaat’s and Lassi’s are. The three that I chose that were not so stellar all give between 3 and 4-star reviews but state the customer was a very picky eater and did not enjoy the type of food. The best example of the reoccurring theme between the 7 best reveiws, and some of the not so good ones is this quote by one happy customer; “The proprietor of Mood Cafe, Hasan Bukhari, takes less than a minute to size up the customer and make the appropriate recommendation - and then a few more to win your heart.”

 **Morimoto**: Morimoto has a 4.5-star rating on yelp, which is pretty high considering it has 997 reviews. It is very important to note that this is a very upscale restaurant, so the customers and more important, the people writing the reviews I have chosen most likely have experience and will be significantly more critical in their reviews of the restaurant. The overall theme or common thread of the reviews seem to be that it is very good food and very expensive. A lot of reviewers noted that it is kind of bland from the outside but once you walk in it is unique and modern. The uniqueness of the décor carries over into the food, which some said was exotic yet simple. One reviewer summed it up pretty well, “Overall, it's a pricey exercise to do dinner at Morimoto, but the food is wonderfully crafted and beautifully presented with some original creative twists here and there. Definitely worth a visit.”

**Section 3:** My Choice

 If I had to choose one of these restaurants on the basis of these reviews alone, I would choose the Mood Café. The important fact that swayed my decision was all of the positive reviews towards the owner’s attitude and customer service. I believe that even the best most expensive dinner cannot compare to one that actually means something, and it appears that is exactly how the owner of Mood Café feels too. He tries to become your friend while winning your appetite, and your heart too, and that is more important than bragging to your friends about how much money you just spent on dinner.

**Section 4:** Media vehicles recommended

 **Mood Café**: This restaurant is very small and unique, there is only really one other restaurant in the city that makes this type of food, and it is nowhere near this location and they do it differently. They do Chaat’s, which is a medley of very different flavors combined with a bunch of different sauces that complete the dish, and each one can be made differently. The owner responds to every not stellar Yelp review, and offers them their money back at least, if not free food next time made completely differently. I would recommend that he continues to do this, and also pursue electronic advertising over the internet whether it is groupon.com or some other related websites that offer deals to draw in new customers.

 **Morimoto**: Masaharu Morimoto was the first Iron Chef, on the popular Food Network TV show Iron Chef, so television is already one of his media vehicles, people can watch that program and about once a month watch the executive chef of this restaurant compete, almost always winning, in a cooking competition, that kind of stuff markets itself. Also, aside from that type of publicity on a popular TV show, Steven Starr owns and operates many outstanding restaurants in Philadelphia making his name well known and respected in the restaurant industry. The recommended media vehicle for this restaurant is magazines, as they already have television covered. A magazine based marketing campaign will aid the restaurants already classy reputation and get the name spread by word of mouth even more than it is now.

**APPENDICIES:**

**Mood Café Reviews:**

**1.) 5/29/14** - The Greeks were wise: one should be on guard against argumentum ad hominem.

I would think there's a fair proportion **of** yelp reviews that disparage an establishment based on what they perceive to be a disproportionate ratio of patrons that have disregard for basic hygiene and attire that doesn't wage all-out war on the people's sensibilities. I refer to the "H" people - not homeless, but hipsters. But, just because the hip.... people find merit in a restaurant, shouldn't be held against a restaurant. Admittedly, I have long been challenged in this belief by the places I've given the benefit of the doubt of a trial - but, Mood Café is one of the rare instances where I concur with the H people.

Philly seems to have its share of establishments where the owner's personal interaction is both engaging as well as entertaining to watch. The proprietor of Mood Cafe, Hasan Bukhari, takes less than a minute to size up the customer and make the appropriate recommendation - and then a few more to win your heart.

It's a thoughtful business model. Mood Café provides dozen of variations on Chaat (traditional savory snack in South Asia often served roadside or by food carts) that go beyond the basic Samosa Chaat, Papri Chaat, and Paani Puri to non-traditional combinations that feature salads and meats. Same is the case with Lassi (yogurt based drink, more popular in summer months in the subcontinent) where you can order beyond the typical salted, sweet, or mango Lassi and select non-traditional flavors like Raspberry, Plum, and Mint. Hasan is thus able to offer considerable variety to customers at affordable price points, and helps them navigate through the extensive menu - then he tops that up by assuring them that if they don't like it, they don't need to pay for it. It's not simply the implied money-back guarantee, Hasan ensures that clients aren't hassled and leave happy even if that entails offering small sized cups of Lassi to crying toddlers who want to drink what their mothers are!

I tried the Samosa Chaat and liked it (4 stars) because it was liberally sprinkled with Chaat Powder as is tradition and was suitably spicy. But, I thought the fusion of flavors was more to the tune of what I see in Indian restaurants as opposed to Pakistani ones (that typically emphasize one flavor in a dish). What won me over (beyond the fact of finally dining at a clean, hygienic Pakistani eaterie!) was that Hasan doesn't simply boast idly on his product - he delivers results. When I asked for advice on which dessert to try: Carrot Halwa or Ras Malaai, he immediately guided me to the Kheer (rice pudding). When I asked: why? He responded that you wouldn't have eaten anything like it before. That was a strong assertion, one that I dismissed internally having tried tens of thousands of versions in life, given my sweet tooth. He laughed and said most versions people have tried (especially at Indian buffets that I am all too familiar with) are simply rice boiled with milk. I couldn't resist the challenge, and while I didn't give him the satisfaction of seeing me eat the rice pudding on the spot - must confess that I was blown away completely when I tasted it. Quite possibly the best version of (sub-continental) rice pudding I've e.v.e.r had.... Solid 5 stars.

So, go to Mood Café, and say hello to Hasan. Do try the Chaat and Lassi - but save appetite for some of the best rice pudding you'll ever eat.

**2.) 5/25/14** - Fantastic selection of Lassi flavors, and if you try one you don't like he will make you a new one for free.

Equally high quality selection of Chaat.  Never been disappointed and visit once a month at least.

Super casual take out place.  Only a few seats.  Not a place to bring people to sit down.

Must try place for smoothie and chaat lovers

**3.) 4/19/14** – To some, joy may be found in dining at a fancy restaurant with ordinary service and food for a steep price. To me, bliss is discovering a jewel in the rough where the service and food is indeed extraordinary for less than $10! I've always wondered but now I understand why Mood Café is rated the best restaurant in the city of Philadelphia.

1. First of all, the food here reflects the owner's philosophies. Made with love and care, the intricate blend of ingredients is truly magical. Each flavor is bright, distinct, and amazing. I cannot recommend a specific lassi or chaat because if you choose from any of the literally hundreds of possible combinations, you will not be disappointed. Although Hassan always says kindly that you can have your money back anytime if you do not approve, no one has ever done so.

2. From the wildly popular rose lassi to the many fruits in the chaats, every single food item on the menu is made fresh from scratch. It makes you wonder if he is actually hiding a huge secret elaborate garden somewhere?!

3. Vegan, lactose-intolerant, and can't eat spicy? No worries fellow patrons. At Mood Café, it's all about you, the valuable customer. And amazingly, it doesn't matter what you prefer, because you'll find out it all will taste oh so delicious!

4. Hassan personifies what all business owners should strive to become: friendly, accommodating, down to earth, and funny. When you leave Mood Café, you'll have both your stomach and heart content with incredible food and genuine love.

I honestly wish Mood Cafe was more common in the world. People like Hassan working hard to make the best food with the best service possible, not the cash that comes with it. Simplicity and perfection at every level. Bravo!

**4.) 5/10/14 -** I came here with my girlfriend last night after reading a lot of great reviews, and it really lived up to its hype. The owners name is Hasaan, and he greeted us as we walked in.
He explained to us what chaat is and how he makes it. He asked us a few questions and custom made 2 orders of chaat for us - one with chicken, and one with lamb. Each bite had a totally different taste and texture. It was incredible. I'll definitely visit again.

**5.) 4/14/14** - Don't know why an additional 5 - star review would be needed for this great business, but let me put my two cents in, and why I think this is one of the great spots in Philly, especially for Indian/Pakistani chaats & lassis.

Though the online menu shows most of the chaats & lassis available, they are more than willing to let you try different combinations of different ingredients to try and find something to fit your taste and/or mood for the day.  Which is a very nice change from many restaurants which have the attitude "if its not on the menu, we won't make it/don't have it".  If you ask for something special, they will try and accommadate you (provided they have the ingredients, of course).

My understanding of "chaat" is that it's supposed to be a streetside snack, or at best, an appetizer, and not supposed to be a full meal.  If you look at it in that light, you should have a very good experience here.

The lassi (Indian-style "milkshake") list is huge, and you can find something for almost any taste, from more traditional sour/salty lassis, to more Americanized, sweeter versions, and anything in between.  I've never been dissapointed in any lassi I've ordered here either.

They also have a small variety of desserts, the cottage-cheese balls (can't think of their name), rice pudding, and a few others, for take - out.

Though there is a small area for eat - in, it's best for take out, as it's a fairly small place.

**6.) 4/2/14** - I really wish this was in Chicago. I always trust yelp when I'm traveling and this...fine Philly yelpers, you have done so good by me. I can not express my delight in what you have lead me to.

The owner put together what was essentially a perfect meal, and since I mentioned I'm only in town for a week, promised to up the crazy of my chaat if I managed to come back in since he normally eases people into new and exciting chaats but you know, only a short while left. I hope that I can make it back because such delicious food. Aah!

**7.) 4/6/14** - Mood Cafe is still delicious, even two years later! My best friend and I went back yesterday to celebrate her birthday and, yet again, the owner asked if it was our first time and offered to make us lassis until we were satisfied.

As always, the food was delicious and I only needed my lassi made once. I ordered the Queen lassi - yes, based on the name alone - and could not have asked for a more delicious drink.

**8.) 5/16/14** - I really wanted to like Mood Cafe, but unfortunately I didn't have an amazing experience. In fact, I only ate a few spoonfuls of the chaat before I left.

I would love it if Mood could expand their menu. I don't drink lassis, so I decided to just try the chicken tikki chaat. I didn't really get the explanation that chaat is a mixture of a bunch of different flavors, but when I checked out their online menu, I was skeptical if I could find anything for me. IF YOU'RE PICKY, BEWARE. Chaats are actually just a bunch of different things put together. I couldn't deal with all the conflicting tastes and textures. I only wish there were another option for those of us who don't like chaat. I'm giving him 3 stars anyway since apparently I seem to be one of the few who don't like lassi or chaat, oops.

Also, I was a little put off by how they make everything in the kitchen. I see them microwaving the meats right behind the cashier, which I find a little weird. The chicken was in tiny bits to the point where I couldn't even find it in the chaat. The meal wasn't even cheap enough to merit this, in my opinion.

The place is tiny. I came on a warm day, but it was drizzling, and a few groups of people were hogging the seating inside, talking and laughing and having a grand ole time while a few of us had to sit at wet tables outside. Try to get it to-go if you can! And I didn't really get a nice chat with Hasan, like the rest of you are saying! Maybe he was having an off day, but not too sure I'll come back to find out.

A nice hole in the wall, but make sure you like lassis or chaat before checking it out! Maybe it was my fault for mindlessly checking out the best-rated Philly restaurants on Yelp... but isn't that the point?

**9.) 5/27/14** - Nice place. They seem to be going for Guiness world record for most Lassi and Chaat flavors. Not only that, the food is also good. the Chaat looks a little strange. I must admit I was apprehensive, but once I tried it it was quite good. I had the Kunna lamb Chaat and my wife had the Chicken Keema. We also had a Lychee Lassi and a Date Almond Lassi, along with a sample of one that had strawberry in it. Only downside is this place is a bit of a hole-in-the-wall with very little seating. Probably better for takeout, although we were able to get one of the three tables when we were there.

**10.) 5/22/14** - My gf and I actually didn't really care for the food that much. It's different: the idea is for each bite to have a different flavor.

However, I'm giving 4 stars to this place because the owner insisted that we not pay until after we ate, and said that he wouldn't charge us if we didn't like our food. That is just awesome.

There are a lot of different lassi flavors; my gf and I got to separate flavors. However, both pretty much tasted like mango lassi to us. Ah well.

**Morimoto Reviews:**

**1.) 4/21/14** - I've been to Morimoto a total of two times and I'll definitely go again.

I love most of their dishes with the exception of sushi and sashimi. I've been to many coasts and island where they have extremely fresh fishes and thus I know where when the fish is not fresh.
However, on the up side, ALL of their dishes are amazingly delicious. I would always order 3-4 plates of appetizer to share before having our entrees. They're appetizers are amazing, I could go there just for their appetizers.

The dessert however is not outstanding but is not bad either.

**2.) 5/28/14** - A couple of weeks ago, the BF and I decided to come here spontaneously for a couple of reasons: it had always been on our bucket list, and both of us wanted sushi (or some variation of it).  We finally decided to cross this upscale, and dare I say, decadent hot spot off our list.

I'm always a bit apprehensive with Stephen Starr restaurants (they're very hit or miss), but Morimoto was a surefire hit.  Definitely worth the time and the money, but not with some exceptions.   Needless to say, it's an experience everyone should do at least once, and the high quality food and service makes it worthwhile.

What we liked:
-Those interiors. Like seriously. It might be a little late 90s-early 00s but they are still gorgeous
-The sashimi appetizer was incredible.  Some of the best raw fish I've ever had in Philly.  Variety and flavors were on point. I could eat that for days.
-Foie Gras and Grilled Eel with Sake Meyer Lemon and Asian Pear. Let that sink in.
-Duck Duck Duck was unreal. I was also surprised at how much duck breast they put on your plate. Definitely more than enough food and justifies the price point.
-The tres leches cake for dessert was unique and incredibly creative. Additionally, it was sweet without being too sweet.

What we didn't like:
-The bar service needs work. Our server informed us that they had someone new starting. It took forever to get our cocktails, and my yuzu gimlet tasted like water (luckily, our server was happy to replace it with an alternate beverage)
-The Black Miso Cod was nothing to write home about

Overall, it's a pricey exercise to do dinner at Morimoto, but the food is wonderfully crafted and beautifully presented with some original creative twists here and there. Definitely worth a visit.

**3.) 5/24/14** - This place is very trendy and unique, with great food.

This is a very nice place to have a special intimate dinner or date.

My boyfriend and I don't get too the city much.. but have been here three times. we had our six month aniversary here and met the manager when he came over to say hi. He told us to come back for our year anniversary.... and we did! (We cheated a bit and came back a little earlier too!) Hey! We've been thinking about that sushi for a half a year lol don't judge!

Honestly, the dishes are slightly expensive, that's why we reserve this place for special occasions.... however they offer large portions and huge tasting plates for sharing.  That aside IMHO the ala cart sushi is the best reason to come here. My boyfriend loves the duckduckduck he's had it all three times! Lol. He dreams about it... but although ive had three different and delicious meals Id rather make a meal of the sushi. It's So fresh! The best I've ever had.... melt in your mouth delicious... \*drools on keyboard\*
Also the morimoto tempura is a great appetizer.

**4.) 4/27/14** - I think the hundreds of other reviews speak for themselves. Very good and very expensive. Quality wise this place probably has some of the best sushi in Philly. Some creative and exotic dishes as well.
Service wise, it's always been excellent.
As for the room, it's very large and the modern looking decor is nice. Despite the size of the room, definitely get reservations for busy times because this place tends to fill up.
Overall, I'd say this is a nice spot to try once on a blue moon, but there are plenty of other sushi restaurants in the city and surroundings that are on par with the quality of fish for a much lower price.

**5.) 4/19/14** - I admit I'm not a huge fan of the show a Iron Chef, but of course I'm aware of Iron Chef Morimoto.  While in Philly, I felt compelled to visit his restaurant.

The restaurant is easy to pass without noticing.  Once inside, the restaurant is very modern looking.

I had the lunch sushi sampler for $26 which came with miso soup and salad along with a good assortment of thirteen pieces of sushi which were so fresh and delicious.  I'm not the biggest sushi fan, but the sushi was clearly terrific.  I really enjoyed it.

Brian, the server, was very friendly, helpful, and attentive.  The other workers were very pleasant as well.

**6.) 4/14/14** - How can I possibly start this review?  GO. DO NOT STOP.  DO NOT HESITATE.  We got the Chef's Tasting Menu and then added the Duck Duck Duck to round out our dinner.  Amazing. Simply delicious. And definitely get the tasting menu - you get items not on the menu. We got a pan seared  half lobster and a sashimi sampler that was off menu.  Simply amazing.

I like sweet drinks and got the yasumi cocktail..  Dangerously delectable.

Seriously tho..  We had 10, maybe 11 courses and they were all ridiculous.

**7.) 5/18/14** - This place is great. And it's not as expensive as people think. When it comes to quality, authentic Japanese food, Morimoto is sure to please. The atmosphere is amazing... Our waitress told us that the lighting and the wavey decor and ceiling were done that way to make you think of the tranquility of peaceful waves. Definitely a one of a kind place. Like I said, this place is authentic, so do not expect to find crazy house special fusion rolls. I've been here a few times and the service is always superb.

**8.) 4/7/14** - A true gem of a restaurant in Philadelphia - which could easily compete in any of the largest gastronomic centers in the world (think: Paris, Tokyo, New York, and San Francisco).

The attention to detail is an absolute must, especially with Japanese cuisine where the food is deceptively complex yet simple. Morimoto embodies simplicity with precise attention to detail and makes for one amazing dining experience.

While I can't speak to much on the fusion aspect of this restaurant, I can say that even Japanese purists will be satisfied at Morimoto. The sushi and sashimi was phenomenal, all components served at the exact temperature to bring out the wonderful briny complexities of a fish like mackerel while accentuating the robust nuttiness of salmon.

The dashi at Morimoto is great as well and paired well with several dishes I ordered (soba and tuna tartare). Truly wonderful. I can't wait to visit Philly and explore other offerings at Morimoto.

**9.) 4/7/14** - Not often do I have Asian fusion and really love it, but I guess Morimoto wouldn't be the iron chef if his food wasn't anything but top notch.

First, I would highly recommend a reservation. They do have a lounge area where the full menu (with the exception of the omakase) is served, but is first come first serve. So if there is no space, you may be out of luck.

If you don't try anything else, get the pork belly. The way it is described in the menu, I thought it would come in a large bowl of congee, but see my picture, its a nice fatty piece with congee like rice in the plate. The two components balance each other out very very well, which is why I love this dish so much.

We also ordered the black cod. It had a very nice layer of crispy skin on the top, and the fish was perfectly cooked. Grab a side of the wasabi fried rice, it will go really well with the fish! Don't let the name deter you, the wasabi taste is mild, and like I said, add this to your fish meal.

Ordered a special cocktail for the evening, which, to be honest, I don't recall the name of. But it was excellent. Refreshing and not to sweet. My friend ordered the cilantro drink which she loved.

In terms of pricing, I think it's really fair. My friends and I shared everything we ordered, and we got two appetizers, two pieces of sashimi, two entrees, three drinks, and one order of dessert (matcha tres leches... yuuuuuuum), and it came out to approximately $60/person. We all anticipated paying $100 each, so we thought we got a steal.

I loved what Morimoto put together and definitely plan on visiting his other locations.

**10.) 5/3/14** - Morimoto is everything that you would expect it to be!!  Totally delish from cocktails to appetizers to my entree - the food here is just incredible...  The staff are professional, efficient, and eager to serve you and the food is always spectacular!!  I love this place and you will too!!

**NOTE**: To find any of these reviews on the Web, search the restaurant name on Yelp.com