

Welcoming Marketing in the Food and Beverage Industry: Human Bonding as a Relationship-Based Business Model

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ABSTRACT: The food and beverage industry operate in highly competitive environments characterized by low switching costs and increasing transparency driven by digital platforms. Traditional marketing strategies focused primarily on price and promotion have shown limited effectiveness in sustaining long-term competitive advantage.

This study **investigates welcoming marketing as a relationship-based business model** grounded in authentic human interaction and the active involvement of restaurant owners in customer relationships. Adopting a qualitative and exploratory research design, the article analyzes how welcoming marketing practices influence customer loyalty, word-of-mouth communication, and online reputation in independent food and beverage businesses.

The findings suggest that **human bonding functions as a strategic mechanism of value creation**, strengthening emotional attachment, encouraging spontaneous customer advocacy, and supporting the long-term sustainability of relationship-based business models in the food and beverage sector.

1. INTRODUCTION

The food and beverage sector faces intense competition, low barriers to entry, and growing consumer reliance on experiential and relational cues when choosing establishments. In this context, differentiation strategies based solely on product attributes or pricing have become increasingly fragile in sustaining long-term performance. Relational and emotional factors play a central role in value creation, particularly in high-contact service environments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship marketing, customer experience, and word-of-mouth literature emphasize trust, emotional engagement, and interpersonal influence in shaping consumer behavior. However, these streams are frequently addressed in isolation, which limits their explanatory power when applied to independent food and beverage businesses.

3. WELCOMING MARKETING AS A RELATIONSHIP-BASED BUSINESS MODEL

This study conceptualizes welcoming marketing as a **distinct relationship-based business model** in which value creation is driven by authentic human interaction between owners and customers. Rather than relying primarily on promotional spending, this model leverages social bonds, emotional recognition, and personal engagement to generate repeat patronage and organic growth.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR FOOD AND BEVERAGE BUSINESS MODELS

Welcoming marketing reshapes food and beverage business models by **structurally reducing customer acquisition costs** and enhancing customer lifetime value. The model supports sustainable competitive advantage and is particularly effective for independent restaurants seeking differentiation without reliance on scale or standardization.

5. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach based on direct observation of service practices, analysis of spontaneous customer feedback and online reviews, and a systematic review of academic literature related to services marketing and hospitality.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis indicates that welcoming marketing strengthens customer loyalty, amplifies positive word-of-mouth, enhances online reputation, and transforms customers into active brand advocates. These outcomes collectively support the viability of welcoming marketing as a sustainable business model in the food and beverage sector.

7. CONCLUSION

Welcoming marketing emerges as a **theoretically grounded and managerially viable** relationship-based business model capable of generating long-term value for independent food and beverage businesses. By prioritizing human bonding and relational capital, firms can achieve differentiation and resilience in highly competitive markets.