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Attribution Theory Makes Way for Dining Etiquette to Play a Role within the Domain of Relationship Marketing

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The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the development of the theory of relationship marketing, particularly in relation to the role dining etiquette plays within that domain. This conceptual paper consists of an analysis and elaboration of current markers and drivers in relationship marketing theory, and expounds on the importance of dining etiquette.

Dining etiquette is a set of social morays, norms, and customs that one adheres to while eating with company. It is a learned skill not everyone has honed. Could a salesman with poor dining etiquette be professionally disadvantaged if business is conducted over a meal? Attribution theory explains that people interpret events/behaviors by attributing one or more causes to them through inference. Prior research suggests negative information is weighed more heavily when participants form comprehensive evaluations of others. Theoretically, poor dining etiquette at a business lunch/dinner could produce a negativity effect, thereby hampering current or future business dealings.

The present research demonstrates conceptually that dining etiquette has a positive moderating effect between certain relationship marketing markers (perceived source credibility, perceived corporate credibility, perceived competence, and attitude toward the company) and fundamental relationship drivers (commitment, commitment velocity, customer satisfaction, gratitude, and purchase intent). A framework is suggested for planned empirical analysis to quantitatively reveal the effects of dining etiquette valence as a moderator.

Drawing on Attribution Theory, this paper examines the role dining etiquette plays within the domain of relationship marketing. Managerial implications are discussed. Currently, there is no extant marketing research, theoretical nor empirical, that studies the effects of dining etiquette valence.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Jennifer R. Bechkoff received her PhD in Marketing from the University of Cincinnati. She is currently an associate professor in the Department of Marketing & Decision Sciences at the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business at San Jose State University in San Jose, California. Dr. Bechkoff is also certified as a business etiquette consultant from the Etiquette Institute; her current research interests are in the areas soft skills in marketing pedagogy and dining etiquette in relationship marketing.