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The Effects of Persuasion on Tipping

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Introduction and Purpose

This study was conducted to observe the influence of different persuasion techniques on customers in a restaurant setting. This research has the potential to give insight into tipping behavior among people involved in customer-service based business. This study was conducted to observe the influence of different persuasion techniques on customers in a restaurant setting.

This research has the potential to give insight into tipping behavior among people involved in customer-service based businesses. My study examined the relative effectiveness of two persuasion techniques (reciprocity and the foot-in-the-door technique). There have been no previous studies shown in which persuasive tactic is more influential.

With two million people working as a server nationwide, (Wessels, 2018), working at or below minimum wage, with an average mean annual pay of \$25,280, (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018), this study is designed to show the most beneficial way to increase their money. The minimum wage for servers varies from state to state since there is a 50% tip credit allotted by the federal law (Wessels, 2018). The research was conducted in the state of Texas which has a minimum cash wage paid by employers of \$2.13 an hour, but only if the tips received make up at least \$5.12 an hour. This is to ensure they are meeting the minimum wage requirements of \$7.25 an hour according to the Texas labor of laws (Federal and State Wages, 2018).

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 154 participants and 60 groups of paying customers that were recruited in a Texas De Brazil restaurant, located in Tyler Texas. This study consisted of participants of the ages 18 and over who dined in the restaurant.

Procedure

Each table of customers will be randomly assigned to one of three conditions using a random number generator app. My strategy to induce reciprocity included giving a piece of chocolate candy per customer when presenting them with their bill.

The other third of the total paying participants will experience a foot-in-the-door technique. To induce the foot-in-the-door technique, I asked the customer to hand me a utensil, such as: a fork, plate or tongs from their table just before I presented them with their bill.

One third of the participants were randomly selected to take part in the control group. These customers did not receive any special technique of persuasion and were recorded in comparison to the other two persuasion groups.

Materials

The materials used for the reciprocity condition consisted of Hershey's kisses chocolate candy. One piece of candy was given to each customer residing at the table. There were no materials necessary for the control group and foot-in-the-door conditions.

Abstract

The purpose of this project is to assess the relative effectiveness of two different types of persuasion techniques on tipping behavior in the restaurant industry. This study is designed to benefit the millions of people involved in sales and how to increase profit. I will test the impact of two types of persuasion techniques on tipping behavior in a restaurant setting.

My study will include 60 variables within three conditions. 1/3 of these tables will serve as a control group – no attempts at persuasion will be involved. For the second 1/3 of tables, I will use the foot in the door technique. This will involve asking the customer to hand me an item from their table at the end of their dining experience. I will then promptly hand them their ticket for them to pay out. For the remaining 1/3 of the tables, I will apply the reciprocity technique by providing a chocolate candy just before dropping off the check.

The percentage of tips from each of these three groups will be compared to determine which of these persuasion techniques has the biggest impact on tipping behavior.

Control Groups

	Control	Reciprocity	Foot-in-the-door
Mean	15.02	20.53	19.40
Standard Deviation	6.82	5.98	4.81

	Reciprocity & Control	Foot-in-the-door & Control	Reciprocity & Foot-in-the-door
T-Value	-2.72	-2.35	-0.66
Df	38	34	36
P-Value	.01	.03	.52
Significant	Yes	Yes	No

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Texas Tipped Minimum Wage Laws for 2017, 2018. (2017). Retrieved from www.minimum-wage.org/texas/tipped-employee-minimum-wage
Wessels. 35-3031 Waiters and Waitresses. (2018, March 30). Retrieved from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes353031.htm

Results

Reciprocity and Control:

To test the hypothesis of the effect from two persuasive techniques introduced will increase the tip average, a two-tailed t-test was conducted. The reciprocity group was compared to the control group and the results show that there was a significant difference between the reciprocity technique. This concluded that the reciprocity technique proved to be the more beneficial choice.

Foot-in-the-door and Control.

The control group portrayed the lowest average tip percentage which made it the least effective method to induce higher tip averages. A two-tailed t-test was conducted and compared to the foot-in-the-door condition which showed a significant difference. This showed that the foot-in-the-door technique was more persuasive than the control group.

Reciprocity and Foot-in-the-door.

The foot-in-the-door technique was compared to the reciprocity technique and a two tailed t-test was conducted. The results show that it was not significant. The reciprocity technique proved to be the most persuasive technique in comparison.

Discussion Limitations and Future Research

Results revealed that:

After testing two types of persuasive techniques in comparison to the control group who received no differential service, it was concluded that the reciprocity technique was the most influential with the highest average mean of tips per table. The foot-in-the-door technique compared to the control group had shown a higher average mean of tips which proved to be the more persuasive technique between the two. In comparison to the reciprocity and foot-in-the-door technique, we found that reciprocity showed a greater influence in increased tips.

Limitations

Research was conducted before and after I had undergone surgery on my collarbone. This potentially may have caused an outlier and produced greater tips in sympathy for the researchers broken bone. This study was consecutively conducted over varying months which fell on tax return season and the middle of winter. These have the ability to hinder tips such as seasonal affective disorder, producing lower tips, or a large tax return, resulting in the likelihood of tipping more.

Future Discussion

For this study to be reconstructed, it is recommended that the experiment be done in a variety of restaurants to consider if the results are true for casual and informal dining restaurants. A future study regarding the effectiveness of persuasion on tipping would benefit from the researcher being a male as the initial study was conducted by a female. To reduce outliers related to the time of year, a longitudinal study over the course of a year should be considered.