

Mystery shopper

Chain café brands



Service spy

This month the feedback from Ethos Consultancy's team of mystery shoppers focuses on coffee shop-café at Dubai Mall — were the staff's service skills piping hot, luke warm or cold and tasteless?

This month:

The chosen cafés within Dubai Mall were:

- Caribou Café
- Costa
- Starbucks
- Second Cup

THE WHAT:

Caterer Middle East has partnered up with customer service experts Ethos Consultancy to highlight F&B service standards at outlets across the UAE. Each month, we'll reveal mystery shoppers' assessments of four different F&B outlets, to explore what these venues are doing right and what could be improved.

THE WHY:

This isn't about catching F&B outlets with their trousers down: by measuring performance and providing expert advice on areas for improvement, we want to help better these operations — and the industry in general.

THE HOW:

Ethos Consultancy's trained mystery shoppers are given a specific selection of outlets. Each shopper visits their assigned restaurant and dines as usual. Within 24 hours of every experience, each shopper fills out an online report, providing Ethos consultants with the information they require to offer constructive advice.

Each mystery shopper is looking out for key aspects in the following areas:

- Appearance
- Sales and service
- Overall experience

The Expert Analysis

This month *Service Spy* is all about cafés, with our shoppers visiting four well known coffee chains located within Dubai Mall.

Our top two outlets, Starbucks (89%) and Caribou (86%) were very close and should both be extremely proud of their staff.

The mystery shopping reports concerning these two brands indicated impressive product knowledge from their staff, who had the confidence to make specific product suggestions to their customers — our shoppers were being asked if they'd like extra cream, or even if they'd like a muffin to go with their coffee!

It was also great to see the right questions being asked. For example, at one of the Caribou visits our shopper indicated they had a preference for caramel-flavoured coffee and asked what was available. Without hesitation, the waiter serving this

customer asked if they would prefer a hot or cold drink. It sounds simple, but this is a very important question and in this case led to the purchase of a 'Caramel Cooler': a drink that would not have been considered had the waiter not used his initiative to help find the perfect drink to meet this customer's particular requirements.

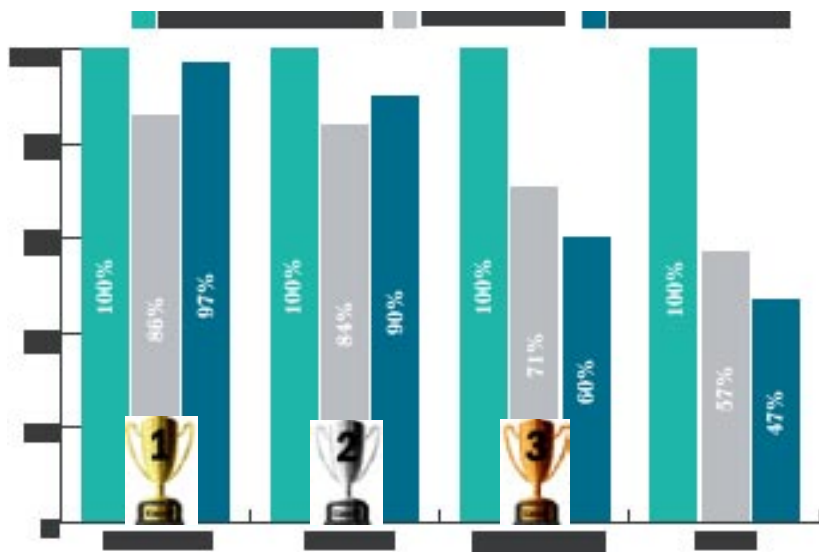
Even if a customer is content to stick with their traditional hot coffee, they will walk away from this experience feeling like their waiter was extremely helpful and actually cared about meeting their needs, all because of a simple question.

Our two lower scoring chains, Second Cup (70%) and Costa (57%) also received a few great reports, but these weren't consistent.

Our shoppers noted instances of staff at both of these chains not greeting customers with a smile, not suggesting products when asked — and one particular shopper who visited Costa even reported that their waiter did not once make eye contact!

As a result, only 50% of our mystery shoppers that visited either Second Cup or Costa indicated they would return — whereas 100% of our Starbucks and

	Appearance				Sales & Service			
	Did the outlet appear clean and tidy?				How long did you have to wait to be served?			
	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4
Starbucks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1-3 minutes	1 min or less	1 minute or less	1-3 minutes
Caribou	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1 minute or less	1 minute or less	1 minute or less	5 mins or more
Second Cup	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	5 mins or more	3-5 minutes	3-5 minutes	1 min or less
Costa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1-3 minutes	1-3 minutes	1 minute or less	1 minute or less



Caribou mystery shoppers said they would head back in an instant.

So what could have been done better?

- Many large coffee chains now boast an impressive range of merchandise. One of this month's shoppers asked how much an item cost and unfortunately the waiter was unable to help. To avoid this scenario, ensure all merchandise is clearly priced and have price lists available for customers to take away.
- The mood of your waiter affects the mood of your customer — and the mood of your customer influences their entire experience and their willingness to return and spend more money. Most waiters are enthusiastic,

happy and extremely helpful which is great, but it's so important for all staff to be at the top of their game, looking interested and engaging with your customers.

We suggest holding staff incentive programmes to engage and motivate employees. These can be as simple as choosing a particular product (ideally one that isn't too popular) and holding a friendly competition between staff — whoever sells the most of this chosen product, relative to the number of hours worked, receives a prize.

- If a customer asks the waiter for a product suggestion, handing over the menu may be the easy option, but it is not the correct one. Unless someone specifically requests to look

ABOUT ETHOS CONSULTANCY

Originating in the UK in 1995, Ethos Consultancy relocated to Dubai in 2003, where a team of five has grown to 50 — with an Abu Dhabi office opening in 2008. Our consultants have come from some of the most mature customer service markets in the world, ensuring experience and best practice in everything we do.

Ethos prides itself on being at the forefront of on-line customer service solutions and was awarded Most Innovative Small Business in the UAE at the 2008 Lloyds TSB Small Business Awards.

Through years of experience, Ethos has developed a variety of services to help clients understand how their business is performing. Our solutions include mystery shopping, satisfaction surveys and a range of benchmarking services. Once clients have a clear understanding of how they are performing, we help them improve via training, consulting and implementation of The International Customer Service Standard.



at the menu, this is service suicide as it sends out all the wrong signals to your customer. They will assume their waiter simply doesn't care or doesn't know the product range well enough to make suggestions. ☹

													Overall Assessment			
Was the sales person knowledgeable about the items on offer?				Did the sales person try to up sell or cross sell ?				Would your experience encourage you to visit this outlet again?				How satisfied are you with the overall quality of service delivery?				
Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3	Visit 4	
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Very Satisfied	
Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	
No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	