

**An Exploratory Investigation of the Sales Forecasting Process in the Casual Theme
and Family Dining Segments of Commercial Restaurant Corporations**

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(Abstract)

Sales forecasting is an essential tool for the planning function of corporate restaurant management. Accurate sales forecasts allow functional areas, such as marketing, advertising, human resources, and finance, to effectively develop programs to advance the company. Examples of these programs include budgets, promotion and advertising campaigns, training programs, and capital equipment proposals. Research in restaurant sales forecasting will aid restaurant corporations in properly allocating resources for more efficient utilization.

Utilizing a descriptive sales forecasting benchmarking model developed by Mentzer et al. (1996; 1999), and adapting the model into the restaurant industry, the research sought to determine the relationship that the dimensions of the sales forecasting benchmarking model (functional integration, approach, systems, and performance measurement) had with level of accuracy of the sales forecast and level of managers' satisfaction with the sales forecasting process. The adapted model addressed two research questions. The first question was what is the relationship of the four dimensions of the sales forecasting benchmarking process (Mentzer et al., 1996; 1999) with the level of accuracy of the sales forecast in the commercial restaurant setting? The second question was what is the relationship of the four dimensions of the sales forecasting benchmarking process (Mentzer et al., 1996; 1999) with the level of managers' satisfaction with their sales forecasting process in the commercial restaurant setting?

A qualitative research methodology combining McCracken's (1988) 4-step method of inquiry and Strauss & Corbin's (1990) grounded theory research methodology allowed investigation of this phenomena. Two propositions guided the research and a scheme was developed that allowed for analyzing the company participants based on the constructs of functional integration, approach, systems, and performance measurement,

level of accuracy of the sales forecast and level of managers' satisfaction with the sales forecasting process.

The analysis revealed that there was a relationship between the dimensions of the sales forecasting benchmarking model and the level of managers' satisfaction with the sales forecasting process. The analysis also revealed that the constructs of performance measurement and level of accuracy of the sales forecast might actually be one construct. Another dimension emerged, training, and scenarios were developed to relate training to the original dimensions. Recommendations were developed based on the research findings and hypotheses were developed based on the propositions. The findings suggest that there is a positive correlation between the dimension of the sales forecasting benchmarking model and the level of managers' satisfaction with the sales forecasting process. That is to say the more evolved a company may be in a dimension, the higher the level of managers' satisfaction with the sales forecasting process.

Dedications

To my family:

Mom and Dad--for love and support, words of wisdom, a shoulder to rest on, and for teaching me that anything is possible through God above.

To Vanessa, Greg, Keith, Eric and Lisa--Thank you for your love and support!

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"But seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness and all these things shall be added to you."

Matthew 6:33

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"But those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."
Isaiah 40:31

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