



### Article Title

Approaches, techniques, and information technology systems in the restaurants and foodservice industry: a qualitative study in sales forecasting.

### Citation

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### Abstract

This is a study about the approaches, techniques, and information technology systems utilized for restaurant sales forecasting in the full-service restaurant segment. Companies were examined using a qualitative research methods design and long interviews to gather information on approaches, techniques, and technology systems utilized in the sales-forecasting process. The results of the interviews were presented along with ensuing discussion.

### Methods

Due to the nature of the study, a qualitative method was deemed most appropriate. Marshall and Rossman (1999) indicated the purpose of a qualitative study is to investigate little-understood phenomena, to identify/discover important variables, and/or to generate hypotheses for further research. An in-depth interviewing technique in the current study followed the four-step method of inquiry presented by McCracken (1988). The first step in McCracken's (1988) design is a thorough investigation of literature to support the interview protocol to be used. The second step is to review the researchers' familiarity with the phenomenon to be investigated. The third step is to develop the interview protocol and procedures to collect the interviews. Finally, McCracken's fourth step is to conduct interviews and simultaneously to analyze the interview information until no new knowledge is gathered.

### Results

Major findings included a wide variety of software and hardware used among participants as well as varied approaches and techniques to sales forecasting. The results also indicated that interviewees experienced varied levels of satisfaction with the approaches, techniques, and information systems that were in use.

### Conclusion

The interviews were informative and presented the opportunity to explore a growing phenomenon in the restaurant industry. The summary of results presented showed the range of approaches and technologies used in sales forecasting. The current research had both scholarly and practical implications that referred back to the objectives of the study. First, the study benchmarked current approaches, techniques, and information technology systems used for

sales forecasting in restaurants. The study gave a snapshot of what type of systems are currently being used and where there is room to develop a growth strategy to improve these systems. The study also gave a snapshot of the various approaches used to develop the sales forecast along with particular techniques used. This point leads to the second implication, conceptual theory development in the restaurant industry. A literature review yielded no studies in the restaurant industry focusing on the approaches, techniques, or information technology systems for the sales-forecasting process or procedures at any level: property or firm level. This could add to the current literature stream of foodservice forecasting in the noncommercial environment and to the limited forecasting research in the restaurant industry.