

Understanding Customers: The Jobs to Be Done Theory Applied in the Context of a Rural Food Pantry

J. Mitchell Vaterlaus, PhD, LMFT; Natalie Martineau Cottle; Emily Vaterlaus Patten, PhD, RDN, CD; Robyn Gibbons

ARTICLE INFORMATION

Article history:

Submitted 27 July 2017

Accepted 14 February 2018

Keywords:

Food insecurity

Food pantry

Food relief

Jobs to be done

Dietetics management

2212-2672/Copyright © 2018 by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2018.02.011>

ABSTRACT

Background Food insecurity, and particularly rural food insecurity, has unique challenges associated with it. Understanding the customer or patron needs is increasingly important in resolving this national concern. The Jobs to Be Done Theory posits that when considering customers, it is beneficial to move past demographic profiling and focus on what the customer wants to accomplish by using a particular product or service.

Objective This qualitative study aimed to determine customers' jobs to be done at a rural food pantry. In addition, it seeks to demonstrate the application of contemporary management theory to dietetics practice.

Design A case study approach was used in this study. Case study data collection procedures included six male and six female food pantry patrons in Montana completing in-depth, audio-recorded interviews and surveys. Each person's interview and survey were constructed into individual case descriptions; the case descriptions were analyzed using uniform categories determined by researchers. To identify themes in the holistic case, word tables were created for each uniform category and assessed for key themes representing patrons' experiences.

Results The key themes that emerged were the customer in context, customers' food relief needs, connecting with customers, and barriers to utilization.

Conclusions The application of Jobs to Be Done Theory to rural food pantry customers demonstrates that demographic segmentation does not capture the social, emotional, and functional dimensions for this sample. Investigation of customer experiences, circumstances, and obstacles is important for improving dietetics services.

J Acad Nutr Diet. 2018; ■:■-■.

MANAGEMENT SKILLS HAVE BEEN HIGHLIGHTED as important for registered dietitian nutritionists (RDNs) in today's complex environment. Dietetics scholars stated that management skills are no longer optional, but rather mandatory in every dietetics practice area¹ and encouraged promoting "management as an integral part of professional practice, not a separate career path."² This emphasis on management skill development is evidenced by dietetics education programs' requirement to include "management theory and business principles required to deliver programs and services" and "continuous quality management of food and nutrition services" in the curriculum.³ Applying business and program management skills and theory in a variety of nutrition and dietetics practice areas will aid in disseminating correct nutrition information, understanding customer needs, and improving the services provided. This study considers an application of a business management theory to emergency food relief recipients and can be applied by RDNs who own, operate, or consult with food pantries.

To provide innovative training to RDNs and exceptional services to clients, domain-specific research utilizing

contemporary management theory and practice is paramount. Many organizations have been unsuccessful at understanding their customers because they rely on correlational information despite correlation not implying causation.⁴ Organizations typically gather customer demographic information and segment their marketing efforts based on that information; however, demographics alone do not determine individual customer behaviors and needs.⁵ In light of this trend, Christensen and colleagues⁴ proposed the theory of Jobs to Be Done (Jobs Theory) to focus innovation on "the progress that the customer is trying to make in a given circumstance—what the customer hopes to accomplish."⁴ Jobs Theory posits that customers hire a product or service to fulfill a job that needs to be done. This job to be done could be anything from needing to drill a 4-inch hole (they might buy a drill and drill bit) to wanting to feel elegant (they might buy an expensive, brand-name handbag).⁵ With Jobs Theory, it is important to recognize that circumstances supersede customer characteristics or trends, and that every job has social and emotional dimensions.⁴ In effort to understand what job someone is hiring a product or service to do, three questions can guide understanding: (1) What experiences

RESEARCH

will help customers make the progress they are seeking in a given circumstance? (2) What obstacles must be removed? (3) What are the social, emotional, and functional dimensions of the job?⁴

The current study aimed to identify the utility of Jobs Theory in the emergency food relief area of dietetics practice. Typically, people receiving emergency food relief are referred to as recipients or beneficiaries, but to be consistent with Jobs Theory the term *customers* is utilized throughout this article. According to Christensen and colleagues,⁴ one method that has been used to discover the jobs that customers need done is interviewing current customers. As a starting point, using the Job Theory as a framework, this case study relied on in-depth interviews and surveys to understand what jobs current customers hire a rural food pantry in Montana to complete.

RURAL FOOD PANTRIES

In the United States, approximately one in six households experiences food insecurity, which is defined as “having inconsistent access to adequate food because of limited financial and other resources.”^{6,7} Inconsistent access to adequate food is particularly challenging in the rural areas of the United States because people may experience difficulty finding transportation to grocery stores, have fewer grocery stores available, pay higher food prices, and experience less variety and decreased freshness of available food.⁸⁻¹⁰

Food pantries provide one solution to those facing food insecurity.¹¹ Of those Americans considered food insecure in 2016, 58.0% received no assistance from any programs, 20.3% received benefits only from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), 9.7% received only food pantry assistance, and 12.0% received both SNAP and food pantry assistance.⁶ Access to food pantries varies by urbanicity.¹² Urban food pantries operate within a city infrastructure that allows customers to be in close proximity to food pantries. Rural communities are less population dense, and proximity, inadequate transportation, and limited childcare availability make access to a food pantry difficult. These challenges contribute to nutritional inadequacies in the diets of low-income people in rural communities. In their comparison of rural and urban food pantries, Molnar and colleagues¹² reported that to adapt to these challenges, rural food pantries were more flexible, informal, and individualized; tended to collaborate more with local churches to provide food relief; and delivered food to customers more than urban food pantries.

A large percent of Montanans (44% in 2010) live in rural areas.¹³ From 2013 to 2015, the percentage of food insecure Montanans was close to the national average; 12.2% of households were considered food insecure and 5.6% of the households were categorized as very low food security.⁷ To combat food insecurity, the Montana Food Bank Network,¹⁴ which consists of over 150 partner agencies, works to reduce poverty and hunger. Each year they distribute about eight million pounds of food.¹⁴ One food pantry located in rural Montana was selected to be used in this study. The name is withheld to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The year this study was conducted, this food pantry provided nearly 3 tons of food each day, served about 3,100

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

Research Question: How does the application of the Jobs to Be Done Theory improve understanding of rural food pantry customers' experiences, circumstances, and obstacles?

Key Findings: In this qualitative, case study approach to investigating rural food pantry customer experiences, circumstances, and obstacles, demographic information alone was found to be inadequate in understanding the customer use of the food pantry service.

patrons each month, and provided supplemental foods to seniors and children through their senior groceries and childhood nutrition programs.

PURPOSE OF THE CURRENT STUDY

Food insecure people in rural communities experience unique barriers and challenges to having their food needs met.⁸⁻¹⁰ Some empirical information points to the unique management considerations rural food pantry managers must make to reach their customers.¹² The current study was designed to discover what jobs customers hire a rural food pantry to complete. Understanding the reasons (or jobs) for which customers hire rural food pantries could be a starting point for revising or affirming management decisions in rural food pantries and could possibly provide support for the use of Jobs Theory in other dietetics practice areas.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design

Examining the utility of existing theoretical propositions is an established rationale for using case study design.¹⁵⁻¹⁷ In the design phase, the research team determined the bounding (boundaries) of the case (eg, who are people of interest and who are not, and what services are of interest?),¹⁸ and it was decided that existing customers at one rural Montana food pantry would be included. It was also determined that data collection through in-depth interviews with customers was consistent with existing Jobs Theory inquiries⁴ and case study methodology.¹⁸

Sample

Twelve participants (n=6 women; n=6 men) agreed to participate in this study. The [Table](#) includes demographic information for each participant. Participant ages ranged from 19 to 70 years old (mean=39 years old). The majority of participants were Caucasian (n=11; n=1 American Indian) and indicated a single marital status (n=9). The majority of the sample had incomes less than 150% of the federal poverty level.¹⁹

Procedures and Data Collection

To gain an in-depth perspective of the jobs customers hire⁴ rural food banks to complete, a case study design was selected.^{17,18} In case study research, it is recommended to have multiple sources to understand the case, although there is not a specific recommended number.¹⁸ The researchers

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10158894>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10158894>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)