



“Let’s all go to Dee’s”

By: Sam Featherstone and Nicholas Pell

[A brief overview of the history of Dee’s Family Restaurant and its foundation in the roots of Utah history. Discussed as well are certain Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats found about the company: SWOT analysis of Dee’s]

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Dee's Family Restaurant

History:


“What do you know about Dee's, dad?” I asked. “Dee's? Oh that place has been around for as long as I can remember. My parents used to take our family there to eat. That's a great place (Featherstone!)” Featherstone's answer is the general attitude towards Dee's that the public holds Dee's is a very well-known restaurant here in Utah, and is quite famous for its breakfast menu and thick shakes. For over 70 years, “...eating at Dee's has been a family tradition” (Dee's Menu).

In the year 1924, a young entrepreneur and farm boy, Dee Anderson, decided to give the restaurant business a shot. A few years later, in 1931, he borrowed \$35.00, bought supplies, and began selling five-cent hamburgers to locals. To say the least, the people of Utah loved them, and Dee's Hamburger stands were recognized as “centers of hospitality” (Dee's Menu).

In the 1950's Dee brought the drive-in restaurant idea home to Utah. By establishing drive-in restaurants all over the Salt Lake Valley he provided the people with great food at a great place, at a great price, while earning his respective spot in Utah history.

In the late 1970's the Dee Anderson family decided to sell all of its Dee's Drive-In restaurants to Hardee's (Anderson). Surviving with only a few sit-down family restaurants, Dee's remained in business which, to this day, is comprised of no more than five locally-owned family restaurants.

Maybe some can remember the old jingle about Dee's Family Restaurant:

 *"Let's go to Dee's, let's all go to Dee's, that's what Daddy says and the family all agrees, Dee's Burgers, Cheese Burgers, hot dogs and shakes, everything a taste delight, apple turn-overs, french fries, for goodness sakes, let's all go to Dee's tonight"* (NJW/RDB)!

This jingle still survives today among the locals, and mostly those who are elderly, as the “*Let's go to Dee's song.*” Combined with positive word-of-mouth, Dee's relied and still relies on floating advertisement like this to bring customers back accompanied by new-comers.

Modern Dee's:

The Name itself, “Dee's” and everything on the outside is actually owned by Mike Olsen, the son-in-law of the company founder Dee Anderson. He is more like a property owner than the restaurant operator. That position is filled by Ken Webb, owner of Webbco. Enterprises. He owns and operates everything on the inside of the restaurant, including the machines, product, and employees. In this respect, Dee's is only indirectly family-owned (Barker).

Nowadays, when someone walks into a Dee's Family Restaurant, they can expect a friendly waitress/waiter to sit them quickly and offer drinks to start their meal. Walking into Dee's is almost like entering a time capsule from the 1960's in that it appears to not have changed whatsoever in the past 50 years. This is one of the most unique experiences that Dee's offers that other nearby restaurants do not.

Company analysis:

For the most part, Dee's is a pretty low-stress and laid-back restaurant. Customers keep going back and have for years because of the excellent service and basic quality coffee. Most customers return to Dee's for the experience; one that allows them to "sit 'n chill with friends." Dee's family restaurants are very "family-oriented." This works for them because of the high concentration of families in Utah with similar beliefs. While only 5 restaurants remain, with these, management can be more intimate with its employees and customers to provide them with better service and individualized administration (Barker).

Since Dee's has been around for what seems like forever, people recognize the brand name and return because of it. Not only is it solely located in Utah, but it was also founded here as well. Dee Anderson grew up in Ephraim, Utah. This history is a great opportunity for marketing as it promotes a very intimate home-made feel for customers.

Just as in any restaurant, the servers can either make or break it for the customers. Depending on the servers' attitudes, customers will either be impressed and return, or not and never go back. One of the biggest problems, however, is the fact that most servers have been working for Dee's for years, even decades, and they are bored with their jobs. This boredom is a huge internal weakness for the company, as it can be detrimental to the loyalty of the clientele.

Other restaurants in the surrounding area offer higher quality food and a more appealing atmosphere than Dee's. This threatens Dee's restaurants because its business model is such that change isn't a big part of marketing. If other companies are including more meatless dishes for vegetarian customers, and providing more healthful alternatives to deep-fried food, Dee's, all of a sudden, becomes less-attractive to such customers.

Conclusively, it has been found that Dee's family restaurants are a well-known and highly-functional part of our society here in Utah. From its humble beginnings in the early 1930's to its boom of high-volume drive-in restaurants in the 1950's, and finally surviving with only 5 sit-down restaurants, both Dee's product and brand have developed loyal clientele and an inviting sanctuary for those who thrive on Utah's night life.

Dee's Family Restaurant S.W.O.T. analysis diagram:

Strengths:

- Strong customer loyalty
- Dee's Restaurant has been around for a long time and is well-recognized by the local community.
- Positive word-of-mouth from customers brings in more
- Laid-back atmosphere invites customers to return
- All products are similar and mix well with other products offered by the company (Good Formula)
- Family-Oriented environment accommodates majority of Utahns.
- Service is basic and consistent
- Customers remember positive and lively staff and return asking them by name.
- Going into Dee's is like walking into a time capsule; almost nothing has changed for years and the ambiance is very 60's-like (nostalgic)
- Only 5 Dee's Restaurants currently remain. This provides management with a unique opportunity to have a more intimate relationship with its employees and staff.

Weaknesses:

- When servers have a bad day, they tend to treat their customers poorly which negatively affects the inward flow of clientele.
- There has not been much change in the company concerning product or company face in over 50 years.
- The restaurant appears run-down/dirty.
- The parking lot looks like a mine-testing zone. These both do not provide customers with much incentive to go out of their way to eat at Dee's
- Other than word-of-mouth, there is not much advertising done, if any at all.
- Dee's Restaurant owner, Kenn Webb, is mostly concerned with the bottom line and minimally about employee safety and well-being.
- Most products are pre-frozen and not cooked from scratch on site.
- The majority of the food is very fattening; deep-fried.
- The dessert menu consists of pies and ice cream, nothing else... This is in stark contrast to most restaurants that tend to have much more of a variety.
- Prices at Dee's have been described as too high for the quality of food received

Opportunities:

- Dee's relies on positive word of mouth as their advertisement
- Well-known by the community as a good place to go to have a good breakfast
- Eating at Dee's has been a family tradition for decades
- Dee's has a strong history in Utah with most of its founders originating herein.
- Most locations are positioned in high-traffic areas which provides for more customers
- Dee's is family-oriented which works for it because Utah is well-known for being family-oriented
- Marketed mostly toward older people
- Dee's is not high-stress like other similar restaurants. This provides for a more peaceful and relaxing environment for the customers
- Many customers keep coming back because previous encounters have been positive. These customers also bring in many new customers
- Starting a shift toward a more healthful menu (e.g. no trans. fats in oil and fruit instead of French fries).

Threats:

- Local Restaurants offer better quality food and establishments
- Health-conscious consumers might choose to eat somewhere with healthier food than at Dee's.
- Plummeting economy affects price of food from Dee's food distributors, which gets passed on to the customer (Negative Externality). These price hikes make Dee's a less-appealing place at which to eat.
- Fast food is easier, faster, and more easily available.
- Because nothing ever changes people get bored and some don't have much incentive for coming back.
- Known for offering greasy food. This poses an issue in a more health-conscious society.
- Because the Restaurant looks run-down, some people don't want to eat at Dee's
- Other nearby restaurants are offering more healthful alternatives which attract some Dee's clientele.
- Owner cares more about money than the company's overall health and success.
- Company growth is slow because the majority of the customers to walk through Dee's doors are returning customers.

Dear Dee's Family Restaurant,

6 October 2010

Both Samuel Featherstone and I, Nicholas Pell, marketing students at S.L.C.C., have spent a considerable amount of time researching your company and have been impressed by the extensive history behind what is now Dee's Restaurants. We have noticed that food, especially hamburgers and other similar products are very accessible in today's society. Because there are many fast food restaurants in the surrounding area, we realize that such an influence is a threat to your company. If a consumer can get a cheap hamburger in fewer than two minutes at McDonald's, what incentive do they have to order the same at a Dee's Family Restaurant? Marketing Dee's Restaurants as mellow, family-oriented, sit-down places might be one of the better ways to promote products such as burgers, fries, and shakes.

Dee's Restaurants have a huge advantage over the high-volume fast food chains in that they can offer a more relaxed setting in which one can enjoy their food as opposed to choking it down and going on with their day. Promoting Dee's as an inviting place for friends and family to get together to visit with one another is yet another opportunity for growth. In today's society many people just don't have time to cook dinner or even sit down to eat. Dee's offers hot food, cooked to order, and a friendly establishment in which to enjoy it. That's certainly a competitive advantage over "the other guys."

Concerning the products as they currently stand in the restaurants themselves, it appears that the majority of them are very unhealthy as most are either deep-fried or smothered in greasy cheese. A kind of "awakening" is currently happening in society in which people are becoming more health-conscious. By offering high-fat, sugary, and deep-fried foods, Dee's might be viewed as less-appealing to those in society following this awakening.

We suggest that Dee's implement healthier alternatives to the current deep-fried french fries and other products smothered in grease. We refer specifically to offering healthy salads, sandwich wraps, grilled meat options, and a larger variety of fresh fruit. Furthermore, to discuss the dessert menu, we feel as though it is restrictive and not as extensive as it could be, and that by expanding it, Dee's might be able to increase profits and bring in new customers. We suggest adding low-sugar sorbets and even a variety of fruit topped with light whipped cream to the dessert menu.

The buildings themselves seem run-down, old, and even dirty. Dee's Restaurants might benefit from a make-over. That is to say that if the face itself were changed to a more "up-to-date" design, people might want to come in to check it out. The parking lots are an absolute mess because the potholes are so large that one has to swerve to miss them while also trying to avoid hitting other cars and pedestrians. Dee's Restaurants would certainly benefit from filling in the potholes and cleaning up the place a bit.

Finally, we wish to complement the company as a whole for the consistent attitude of the servers and other staff. We have noticed that the servers, for the most part, have a consistently positive attitude. This is an advantage to the company because customers appreciate to be noticed and treated well. The employees at Dee's are constantly upbeat and pleasant to be around.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward with youthful anticipation to returning to Dee's very soon. We hope that management will take our recommendations into account and possibly alter their business practices because of them.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

-Nicholas Pell

-Samuel Featherstone

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<<http://www.restaurantsinutah.com/utah-restaurants-8-33/family-restaurants/let-s-all-go-to-dee-s-family-restaurant.html>>.