

My Opinion On HIPPOPOTAMUS New Concept.

Part of Groupe FLO, a French leading restaurant operator, Hippopotamus is a “Steak House” restaurant with almost 200 units in France. Over the last recent years, the brand has suffered badly from both the economic situation and a fierce domestic competition.

The time has come for Hippopotamus to prepare for the future and restore a profitable growth. In this perspective, the brand has recently unveiled its new retail concept in Paris that is poised to set a new standard for grill restaurants.

Let’s head to the Bastille neighborhood in Paris, where Hippopotamus renovated and redesigned one of its former restaurant. Discover in a short video what it is all about.

My opinion on this new concept:

- It is undoubtedly a jump into modernity

Thanks to the new design of the restaurant, Hippopotamus provides a more versatile and vibrant atmosphere to its clientele. The dining room is now made of several different areas where people can find the right ambiance that will meet their expectations (eat alone or with a group, enjoy a cosy private zone or a more open and casual one). Moreover, I found that the branding strategy around the mascot engages the audience and gives a special flavor to the place. I also appreciated that the Wifi was running smoothly and automatically.





- The perceived food quality is improving

Although Hippopotamus did not raise its prices with this new concept, the brand has made

noticeable progress in how to showcase its food. Both the cutlery and the plates have been upgraded and the set mats have been judiciously removed from the tables.



Anyway Hippopotamus still has to deal with value for money issue. The average ticket for lunch easily exceeds 20 euros which might have an influence on long-term customer loyalty.



- Hippopotamus has made it possible to offer all-day service

Hippopotamus new concept has been designed to offer a suitable environment for breakfast, lunch and dinner. This is one of the main driver that is supposed to generate additional sales and profits.



- At the end of the day, should this new restaurant be considered as a new concept ?

I have the feeling that the new Hippopotamus flagship restaurant in Paris is more about decor and design than food concept in itself. Let's face it though, people around me appreciated the new environment that really improves the customer experience.

However, I would have appreciated that Hippopotamus put an emphasis on why people should trust and enjoy the way the brand is dedicated to food quality. I did not see any commitments about how the brand carefully selects its meat suppliers to ensure both quality and taste. On a such quality sensitive market, it would have made sense. Hippopotamus seems less engaged in food quality and responsible supplies than the vast majority of new gourmet burgers restaurants that pop-up all over France since a few years.

I did not see food innovations either.

Since the kitchen is just partially opened onto the dining room, there is almost no way to showcase how the meat is prepared and cooked by the kitchen team. Moreover, with the aim of generating extra sales, I think that Hippopotamus should have installed refrigerated

cabinets in the dining room to feature eye-catching desserts.

It goes the same with coffee and hot beverages which are not really promoted through an original merchandising.

To wrap up this visit, I am a bit skeptical about the fact that this new concept will create a long-lasting competitive advantage for the brand. If decor and design bring added value, they are not the toughest challenges to tackle. What really makes a difference is to be able to give birth to a concept that takes your brand to the next level through a creative and relevant operating expertise. Add an exciting decor into it and you're done...

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