

## **Burger Drive-Thru**

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One evening, just past 10 p.m., a visitor to the area, named Sam, was hungry. Sam was staying at a local motel, which was right beside two national fast food outlets – let’s call them The Burger Place and Burger Delight, for convenience. Sam preferred The Burger Place over Burger Delight. However, since it was just after 10 p.m., Sam thought that only the drive-thru at The Burger Place would be open; he expected the “in-store” operation to be closed. He was right; the doors were locked. Since Sam was hungry and really preferred The Burger Place over Burger Delight, he decided to “walk-up” to the drive-thru window; his only option, since he did not have a car.

When Sam arrived at the window, he started to place his order with the store employee (i.e., the window order-taker and cashier). The employee turned to another employee and asked her something. The order-taker then told Sam that he could not place an order at the drive-thru window without a car. Sam told the employee that he did not have a car. The other employee intervened and re-iterated, what appeared to be the store’s policy, a policy that, as it was explained, was instituted to avoid any legal liability on the part of the restaurant (i.e., in case a customer got hit by a car while standing at the window). [By this time, a pickup truck had arrived near the drive-thru window, stopping about 10 feet from Sam.]

The second employee told Sam that he could talk to the manager. Sam was directed to walk up to the second window, where orders are normally picked up. Sam asked the manager why he couldn’t place an order. Sam was once again told that it was because of the liability issue. In addition, the manager told Sam that The Burger Place has, in the past, had baseball teams arrive late at night and walk up to the drive-thru window. These customers were not served for the same reason.

At that point, Sam commented that, since The Burger Place has had customers walk up to the drive-thru in the past, then maybe the restaurant needs to install a walk-up window for this market. The only response Sam got was that the manager was just following store policy.

Unhappy, and still hungry, Sam walked over to Burger Delight, which still had the inside and drive-thru operations open. Sam ordered two burgers and two apple turnovers, all of which were on special. There were signs advertising the specials. Furthermore, since one of the turnover flavours that Sam had requested was not available, the manager at Burger Delight gave Sam a coupon for a “free”dessert for a future visit.

Afterwards, Sam wondered why he should ever patronize The Burger Place again: If they didn’t want his money late at night, while should he give them his money at other times during the day!

**Focus:** Need vs. want; brand (store) preference; attitude; adoption process; evoked, inert and inept sets; market segmentation; target market; marketing mix; monopolistic competition; store policies; dyadic interaction; consumer surplus; positive, negative reinforcement and punishment (learning theory - operant conditioning).

### Questions

1. Explain how each of the above concepts apply to this case. Be specific.
2. Do you agree or disagree with the way in which the store dealt with this issue? Explain.
3. If you were the manager of this store, what would you have done?
4. Is there another way, at the time of the event, in which the store could have satisfied Sam (i.e., feed him!)?
5. During his later travels, Sam noticed that similar outlets did have a “walk-up” window for customers. What are the advantages and disadvantages, to both customers and the store, of this alternative?