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Paying More for Less

Of late, how many times have you been disappointed with the services of premium priced stores or restaurants? Quite often, I am sure... more often than what it used to be like when you were younger and used to go out with your parents for the occasional treat or shopping session!!

Agreed 'quality' is a subjective concept; yet we can easily get into the debate that do we get our money's worth at premium outlets in today's world?

With liberal economy coming into force, purchasing power is no more a matter of concern. This means an increased flow of customers to premium outlets – ready to pay for the product and demanding high quality service. But the flipside of the scenario is that among all the mad-rush, the thing that is taking the backseat is the quality of service, and at times the product itself. Visits to premium restaurants would not be this point clear. One would be greeted with excellent ambience, lovely menu card and et al...but there would be something missing... something as basic as water. Recently, we had a similar experience on one of our eating out—we were asked if we would need regular or mineral water but neither arrived until we asked it repeatedly during the course of our meal. Imagine being served tea (which wasn't hot) at a five-star restaurant in Bangalore. It looked like we were just paying for the ambience at the restaurant and not for the product.

There are some expensive eating joints which have very good interiors and equally good rates but the unpleasant shock comes when you are welcomed with the same old set of upholstery and crockery. Maybe that is an idea to maintain the antique look – who knows!!!

The point that I am trying to put forth is that 'premium' does not necessarily mean better quality as today's experiences go. It has simply become a price-related nomenclature. The other elements that go on to justify the term premium are simply missing. I will give an example to justify my statement. There is this premium garment store, where the product price starts from Rs.5000, but it has a very poorly maintained washroom. The premium image I had of the store all but vanished after one attempt to freshen up.

It is clear that although prices have gone up at every level and customers are more than willing to pay premium, the quality of service is heading south, falling short of everyone's expectations. ♦



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