The Impact of Tangible Quality on Re-Patronage Intention among Fast-Food Consumers

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship between tangible quality (service quality and food quality) towards customers' re-patronage intention in local fast-food restaurant. The objectiveis to determine salient factors that create re-patronage intention toward fast-food restaurant by evaluating the current service performance in those selected fast-food restaurant. The study was conducted quantitatively where simple random sampling method was chosen in collecting data. The dimensions of SERVQUAL and food quality were used as variables in this study in measuring the intention of customers to dine-in at thechosen restaurant. 404 questionnaires were collected and the finding uses the Partial Least Square (PLS) technique to analyse data by using SmartPLS 2.0 Software for validating measurements and testing the hypothesis. Finding of this study prove that there is positive relationship between two factors (menu appeal and responsiveness) which are the salient factors that create re-patronage intention towards local fast-food restaurant. Overall, this study suggest fast food restaurant to focus on delivering values to the customers while enhance the other restaurant qualities to capture long term relation with customers.

Key words: Re-patronage intention, fast food restaurant, SERVQUAL, food quality, PLS

INTRODUCTION

Today, the competitive market keeps increasing and fast-paced growth. Due to that situation to make profits and contribute to the growth of the company, marketing strategies and tactics are very important in the bottom line of the firm. Customer satisfaction, quality and retention are global issues that affect all organizations be it large or small, profit or non-profit, global or local. According to Kaplan and Norton (2001), there has been a strong advocacy for the adoption of customer retention as one of the key performance indicators. International fast food consumption is increasing in popularity and is more global than ever before. In addition, customers form perceptions of fast food restaurants which often differ from country to country.

Competitive advantage with high quality service keeps increasing and become important weapon in business survival. Due to that, the restaurant industry has certainly not been exempted from increased competition or rising consumer expectations of quality. In Malaysia, the consumption of fast food becomes an upward trend. Besides, the restaurant industry is undergoing a dramatic transformation and experiencing heightened competition and the growing numbers of working wives make this trend become a lifestyle for Malaysian. This scenario gives an opportunity to Malaysian citizens to enter this fast-food industry. Many local fast-food providers start develop their own fast-food restaurants and introduce to the market with various concept and design that meets our culture. However, this situation makes the intense competition between all fast-food providers especially the outstanding grow of American franchises. As we can see nowadays, most Malaysian citizens are loyal with American franchise where the concept of the restaurants are acceptable and influence the customers to keep on purchase and dining at these fast-food outlets. Various promotion strategies done by them are really attractive and influence people to patronise at these restaurants. Thus, the popularity of these fast-food franchises becomes a major concern for our local fast-food businesses. They realize that to sustain in this business is really intense and effective strategies should be implemented to cater the attraction of customers.

Literature review

Customers re-patronage intention: Soderlund and Ohman (2003) defined repurchase intentions as 'intentions-as-expectations. While Hellier et al. (2003) defined repurchase intention as the activities of buying again from the same company gathered from the individual's judgment that taking into account his or her

current situation and likely circumstances. Intentions can be described as a subjective judgment about how a person will behave in the future and usually serves as dependent variables in many service research and satisfaction models (Jaini and Ahmad, 2015; Boulding *et al.*, 1993; Soderlund and Ohman, 2003). Primarily, customer experiences become the major phenomenon to an individual and specific event and context (Helkkula, 2011; Schembri, 2006). It can be defined as "totally positive, engaging, enduring and socially fulfilling physical" (Jones and Sasser Jr., 1995) which affect the emotional customer experience that gives the effective interface between consumers and providers. Thus, it engages with emotional aspect or arouses the feeling of an individual that goes beyond personal and subjective elements (Caru and Cova, 2008). Moreover, other studies showed that, it is important to have the capability in satisfying the customer and avoid dissatisfied customers (Khan *et al.*, 2012). For instance, experiences may emerge once the customers tasted the new recipes and experience new restaurant's atmosphere while dining at a restaurant. Besides, the experience can also be formed by the activities of consumption when there is a direct involvement from the consumer itself (Kara *et al.*, 1995).

Various factors have been identified by previous studies in determining the restaurant's quality. The most common factors used in the past studies were food quality, service quality and ambience (DiPietro *et al.*, 2011; Dutta *et al.*, 2014; Perutkova and Parsa, 2010; Ryu and Han, 2010; Ryu and Jang, 2007; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). Other characteristics that influence the selection of a restaurant are the taste of food, price, cleanliness of the restaurants, location, staffs' response time and courtesy, convenience factors, safety, operation hours of a fast-food restaurant and also nutritious menus offered by the business (Min and Min, 2011; Tsai *et al.*, 2007; Kara *et al.*, 1995; Min and Galle, 1996).

Food quality: Food is one of the important elements of having a quality life (Jeong and Seo, 2014). It is a main indicator of customer loyalty and becomes a critical element in restaurant quality (Bujisic *et al.*, 2014; Mattila, 2001; Clark and Wood, 1999). In addition, according to Namkung and Jang (2007), the most important element in dining experience is food quality. There are many factors have influence the restaurants' food quality such as the presentation of the food, functional structure, the method of foods preparation by the restaurants' employees and the knowledge acquired in managing the quality control system (Krasavcic *et al.*, 2012; Medeiws *et al.*, 2011; Meiselman, 2001). Moreover, Susskind and Chan (2000)

found that customers have claimed that food quality was the main reason for them to visit a restaurant. Thus, food quality becomes a critical element in customer satisfaction compared to other restaurant perspectives such as environmental aspects and the service quality offered by the restaurant (Sulek and Hensley, 2004). Besides, other study found that there is a positive relationship between food quality and satisfaction or behavioural intention (Namkung and Jang, 2007). Some elements of food quality such as the taste of food, variation of menu and the nutrition inside the meals give a positive effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty (Kivela *et al.*, 2000). Nutritious menu will also make the customers become healthier over time (Bjork and Raisanen, 2013). Therefore, in food service industry, some important elements in food quality can be measured such as the presentation of the food, the size and design of a menu, and food variation (Raajpoot, 2002).

Service quality: Service quality also creates a major implication on the choice of the restaurant among customers. It becomes the most frequent restaurant's attribute studied by previous researchers (Bujisic *et al.*, 2014; Cronin Jr. and Taylor, 1992; Dabholkar *et al.*, 2000; Ha and Jang, 2010; Mattila, 2001). Service quality has been interpreted from two perspectives; in terms of cognitive evaluation gathered from the service provided to the customers (Taylor and Baker, 1994) and the performance evaluation of each element that built various dimension constructs (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1988). Zeithaml *et al.* (1988) defined service quality as "customer's judgment on the overall excellence or superiority of the service". Therefore, the evaluation of service quality is more subjective from the perspective of customers where it involves customers' expectation and perceived performance (Bolton and Drew, 1991; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1985, 1988). Thus, Parasuraman *et al.* (1988) constructed a service quality model named SERVQUAL in measuring the elements of service quality. The development of SERVQUAL consists of five main dimensions which are reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibles (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1998). However, Bujisic *et al.* (2014) specified that SERVQUAL did not measure some unique elements of restaurant qualities, thus caused a new model to be developed which is named DINESERV. DINESERV model was an extension of SERVQUAL dimensions which included food quality, atmosphere, service quality, convenience, price and value (Bujisic *et al.*, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2009). Besides, other researchers believed that service quality could be enhanced by understanding the characteristics of service in terms of intangibility,

heterogeneity, inseparability, perishability and good performance in service delivery (Akroush *et al.*, 2013; Arasli *et al.*, 2005; Uzkurt, 2009). Therefore, to sustain in the competitive environment, every food business need to develop appropriate service standard that is aligned with the customers' need and expectation (Min and Min, 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on Sekaran and Roger (2010), research design will involve several issues regarding the purpose of study either it will opt for exploratory, descriptive, hypotheses testing or case study analysis. Other than that, it will investigate the setting that will be used and determine the level of involvement of researcher for undergoing the research activities. Extended explanation on the measurement and the potential respondents will be discussed in subsequent sections.

Generally, the research design used in this study is done based on descriptive study. According to Sekaran and Roger (2010), descriptive study is undertaken for many areas in order to learn about the features of an organization or to describe the characteristic of a group of customers in preparing flexible plan that suits common phenomenon and demand. The goal of this kind of research is to extract the profile or to describe relevant aspects of certain situations in favour of individual or organization, or industry. The result might be used as the solution for target organization to make corrective steps as suggested. Descriptive study do provides some convenience as the data collected can help to understand the characteristics of a group, systematically about particular aspects, offer some new idea for future research and as a guide to authorize some simple decision.

For further investigation, this research will opt for correlation analysis. This type of investigation is useful when there is a need to identify what are the factors that contribute most to the dependent variables. When undertaking correlational study, the setting that will be applied for the research must be non-contrived setting. This is because it is done base on natural environment and researcher have the freedom to select the sample. The unit of analysis is individual since the sample is taken from the consumers who dine in at the chosen fast-food restaurants.

In this study, the population is selected based on the number of customers who visitedatfour selected fast-food restaurant's outlets located in the area of Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia. The selection of population based on statistic number of customers is more accurate as compared to population Kelantan because the researchers are able to reduce the error of probability where not all people leave in Kelantan prefer these restaurants as their chosen restaurant. Simple random sampling has been chosen in this study due to this method gives every element in the population an equal chance of being selected as a subject and it also has lessbias and offers most generalizability. According to Sekaran and Roger (2010), there is certain number of respondents will be taken into the execution of the research. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, the number of sample should be taken in this study is between range of 351-357 respondents when the number of population falls between range of 4000-5000 people. Thus, this study has distributed 404 questionnaires to the customers who dine-in at four selected fast food restaurants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With respect to the gender of the respondents, 196 (48.5%) of the respondents are male while 208 (51.5%) are female thus, suggesting that more females eat out in the fast-food restaurants than males. With respect to age, over 75% of the respondents are above 20 years of age indicating that majority of the people that visit the fast food restaurants are matured adults and most of them are capable of generating income to enable them eat out in the fast food restaurants. As evidenced in Table 1, majority of the respondents that visits the fast-food restaurants earns income below RM2000, as normally fast food restaurants offered affordable price. With respect to educational exposure, most of the respondents have secondary education, 181 (44.8%). As level of education increased, the propensity to eat at the fast food restaurants decreases because of their knowledge toward fast food consumption. In terms of race, majority of the respondents are Malay, 390 (96.5%). For frequency of eating out at fast-food restaurants, 51.2% of the customers visit fast food restaurants >5 times. 28.7% visit the fast food restaurants occasionally while 20 and 6.2% visit the fast food restaurants in average 3-5 times, respectively.

Assessment of measurement model This study uses the Partial Least Square (PLS) technique to analyse data by using SmartPLS 2.0 Software for validating measurements and testing the hypothesis. The repeated indicator approach was used to assess the second-order constructs of Service Quality. This method provides the basic of estimating and parsimonious model on the higher-level analysis with the present of Lower Order Constructs (LOCs) (Yap and Kew, 2007). The evaluation of the

Table 1: Demographic analysis

Cases	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	196	48.5
Female	208	51.5
Age <20	95	23.5
20-30	167	41.3
31-40	87	21.5
41-50	34	8.4
>50	21	5.2
Monthly income <RM2000	272	67.3
RM2001-RM4000	78	19.3
RM4001-RM6000	33	8.2
>RM6000	21	5.2
Educational level		
PMR/SPM	181	44.8
Diploma	98	24.3
Bachelor degree	76	18.8
Master degree	30	7.4
Others	19	4.7
Race Malay	390	96.5
Chinese	6	1.5
Indian	5	1.2
Others	3	0.7
How many times you eat at this restaurant?		
<3 times	116	28.7
3-5 times	81	20.0
>5 times	207	51.2

Table 2: Measures of the items and constructs

Constructs	Factor loadings	AVE	Composite reliability	Cronbachs alpha
Reliability				
A1	0.906	0.833	0.937	0.899
A2	0.910			
A3	0.922			
Assurance				
B4	0.892	0.840	0.955	0.937
B5	0.924			
B6	0.932			
B7	0.919			
Tangibles				
C8	0.881	0.731	0.915	0.876
C9	0.896			
C10	0.891			
C11	0.744			
Empathy				
D12	0.865	0.780	0.934	0.906
D13	0.914			
D14	0.886			
D15	0.867			
Responsiveness				
E16	0.888	0.799	0.941	0.916
E17	0.914			
E18	0.911			
E19	0.861			
Menu Appeal				
F20	0.858	0.729	0.931	0.907
F21	0.847			
F22	0.854			
F23	0.849			
F24	0.859			
Customer satisfaction				
G25	0.915	0.823	0.949	0.928
G26	0.919			
G27	0.916			
G28	0.879			
Re-patronage intention				
H1	0.850	0.733	0.932	0.909
H2	0.864			
H3	0.879			
H4	0.830			
H5	0.858			

measurement model is based on the assessment of internal consistency (CR), indicator reliability (Cronbach alpha), convergent validity (AVE) and discriminant validity.

In order to retain an item in the measurement model, it must have significant outer loadings. The indicator outer loadings should be >0.708. Table 2 shows the measurement models of the study and the factor loadings (outer loadings) of the constructs are above the threshold value of 0.708. The values of composite reliability and AVE to test the reliability and validity of the constructs are also revealed that the values are >0.5 for all the constructs, thus construct reliability and convergent validity is achieved. Thus, the results show that Menu Appeal and Responsiveness are the main factors that influenced the?customer's satisfaction towards patronising the fast food restaurants in Kelantan. Followed by Empathy, Assurance, Tangibles and Reliability. All of the coefficients have positive and significant relationships with the customer's satisfaction towards patronising the fast food restaurants in Kelantan.

The next evaluation criterion for reflective models is to check for discriminant validity. The results of Fornell-Larcker criterion showed that the square root of AVE for the constructs is >other inter-constructs' correlation value (Table 3). Therefore, discriminant validity is achieved. Descriptive analysis revealed that Menu Appeal and Responsiveness are the main factors that influence the customer satisfaction towards

patronising the fast food restaurants in Kelantan. Followed by Empathy, Assurance, Tangibles and Reliability. All of the coefficients have positive and significant relationship with the customer satisfaction towards patronising the fast food restaurants in Kelantan. From the result, it suggests that they influenced the customer satisfaction towards patronising the fast food restaurants in Kelantan.

Assessment of structural model: In order to evaluate relationship between the fast food restaurants determinant factors on the customer's satisfaction towards patronising the fast food restaurants, the results of the proposed regression model as specified in the methodology were called. The important criterion to assess the structural model is the estimates of path coefficients and R^2. The estimated values for path relationships in the structural model should be evaluated

Table 3: Discriminant validity of construct (Fornell-Larcker criterion)

Variables	Reliability	Assurance	Tangibles	Empathy	Responsiveness	Menu apeal	Customer satisfaction	Re- patronage intention
Reliability	0.912							
Assurance	0.824	0.917						
Tangibles	0.732	0.818	0.855					
Empathy	0.735	0.829	0.774	0.883				
Responsiveness	0.736	0.826	0.770	0.862	0.894			
Menu Appeal	0.672	0.749	0.733	0.793	0.820	0.854		
Customer satisfaction	0.664	0.735	0.716	0.749	0.772	0.847	0.907	
Re-patronage Intention	0.531	0.528	0.523	0.531	0.545	0.581	0.649	0.856

Table 4: Structural model

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	t-alues	p-values	Decision
H₁				
Service quality -> Customer satisfaction	0.311	5.451	0.00	Support
H₂				
Menu appeal-> Customer satisfaction	0.589	10.394	0.00	Support
H₃				
Customer satisfaction -> Re-patronage intention	0.649	12.586	0.00	Support

in terms of sign and magnitude. The significance of the hypothesized relationship was estimated through bootstrapping. The main criterion to assess the structural models is the R^2 of endogenous latent values. R^2 values of 0.67, 0.33 or 0.19 for endogenous latent variables in the inner path model were described as substantial, moderate or weak by Chin.

This study showed the R^2 value for the endogenous latent variables customer satisfaction was 0.747 which is considered as substantial and re-patronage intention was 0.421 which is considered as moderate.

Another important criterion to assess structural model is the estimate of path coefficients. The estimated values for path relationships in the structural model should be evaluated in terms of sign and magnitude. The study's results showed that the relationships are strong. Therefore, in order to test the significance of the hypothesized relationship, bootstrapping was applied which provided the t-value that indicates whether the corresponding path coefficient is significantly different from zero. The results of the path coefficients and t-values (Table 4) showed that Service Quality with t-value 5.451 and menu appeal with t-value 10.394 at 1% significance level, significantly influences customer satisfaction among customers. Similarly, customer satisfaction with t-value 12.586 at 1% significance level has an impact on re-patronage intention. Therefore, H_1, H_2 and H_3 are supported in the study.

These findings were supported by Chow where higher levels of service quality provided will lead to the higher levels of customer satisfaction which in turn contributes to higher levels of customer repatronage intention. In the restaurant industry context, service quality is seen as one of the core determinants of customer's satisfaction and behavioural intention. In addition, Liu also stated that nowadays customers are not only evaluating the food quality but they do take into consideration the service quality they encountered during their dining experience.

In addition, according to Mattila (2001), menu appeal is a factor used to satisfy and retain the customer to come to their restaurants. This is supported by Ha and Jang (2010), the menu appeal has a positive relationship towards customers' satisfaction. Food presentation is one of the attributes to customer's dining satisfaction. In fact, when the food is well presented, this may make the customers have a good feeling and boost their moods to consume the foods in the particular fast food restaurant they visit (Kivela *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, when favourable nutritional information or health claims were presented, customers had more positive attitudes toward the product and higher purchase intention. Therefore, this indicates that the menu appeal can directly affects the customer satisfaction towards the fast food restaurant.

Furthermore, Kim *et al.* (2009) findings indicated that high level of satisfaction increases customers' intentions to re-patronage. Customers will have the re-patronage intention towards the fast food restaurants if they are satisfied with it.

CONCLUSION

The study had addressed the current service and food quality in local fast-food restaurant. The result has shown that Menu Appeal and Responsiveness are the salient factors create re-patronage intention towards local fast-food restaurant. Reliability is the lowest element in service quality that can influence the customer satisfaction towards patronising the local fast food restaurants.

Based on the result, it can be addressed that there is a significant relationship between service quality and customer's satisfaction (t-value = 5.451). It indicates that service quality is very important in affecting customer's satisfaction to re-patronage intention positively (p = 0.000). It can be concluded that, customer who is satisfied with the quality services provided at local fast-food will have the re-patronage intention towards local fast food restaurant.

Apart from that, we can conclude that menu appeal has significant relationship with customer's satisfaction (t-value = 10.394). It indicates that customer who is satisfied with the menu appeal will have the re-patronage intention towards local fast food restaurant.

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