

RESTAURANT QUALITY ATTRIBUTE ON REVISIT INTENTION: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT: *The foodservice industry just keeps getting more competitive. However, foodservices continue to bleed customers as sales and traffic fell incessantly. Thus, make the job of running existing foodservice keeps getting tougher. In such an environment, marketers are understandably concerned about how to maintain or increase market share through better Foodservice Quality Attribute offered and effective segmentation strategies. This study aims to elaborate on the concepts of quality attributes, customer satisfaction and customer revisit intention and their relationships with the goal of establishing better clarity on the path of relationship flow in the foodservice industry. The authors suggest a framework based on an in-depth review of the literatures and offer an empirical investigation into the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the hypothesized framework. The study starts with an identification of relevant variables and then moves to relationship testing. The authors use SEM model to test the proposed causal relationships. The results empirically confirm Customer Satisfaction as a variable that offers directional influence as a mediator of the relationship between Foodservice Quality Attributes and Customer Revisit Intention. Customer satisfaction found to partially mediate the association between foodservice quality attribute and revisit intention, suggesting that the restaurant quality attribute could influence revisit intention directly and indirectly.*

Keywords: Quality Attribute, Foodservice Industry, Customer Satisfaction, Revisit Intention

1. INTRODUCTION

Foodservice industry in Malaysia showed slow-moving development in terms of outlet expansion, mainly within cafés/bars as well as full-service restaurants as foodservice operators closed failing outlets in 2016. Furthermore, the unsteady government policy reforms in conjunction with the execution of rationalization program and currency depreciation are forcing foodservice operators to deal with high operational costs. However, regardless of slower outlet growth, foodservice operators persistent to see encouraging value sales growth in 2016 through constant new product launches to meet consumers' continually changing needs besides continuous promotion and advertisement campaigns to increase sales. This made the restaurant foodservice industry remains prolific, flexible and also responsive from the impact of competitive environment and it is relentless competition.

The increasing number of foodservice in the industry will also give an impact to the marketing issues such as customer perception and perspective. Foodservice operators need to give special attention to the changes of customer attitudes and behavior since it is more important to retain the present customers than gaining new customers [1]. Marketing practitioners need to have an abundance of passion in achieving customer satisfaction [2; 3]. Foodservice operators are struggling to lift customer satisfaction and keep their current customers rather than devoting additional resources to chase potential new customers. The claim that it costs five to eight times as much to get new customers than to hold on to old ones is key to understanding the drive toward benchmarking and tracking customer satisfaction [4]. Several authors agree that providing high perceived quality attributes that meet the needs and wants of customers is a necessary strategy for survival and success of foodservice

establishments. This is due to the significant positive effect of quality on customer satisfaction [5; 6].

While the importance for survival and success of a restaurant service is well recognized, certain problematic issues surrounding perceived quality make its operationalization very challenging for service marketers. One of the issues is the fact that perceived quality is multidimensional and different customers will judge the same quality differently based upon their differing perceptions [7]. Although the general theoretical relationship between satisfaction and quality attribute has been verified, practical relationships, which could provide more useful information to restaurateurs, have been rarely addressed.

Overall, the purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between restaurant quality attributes, customer satisfaction and revisit intention. The specific objectives of this study were to address the relationship between foodservice quality attributes and customer satisfaction, and to determine customer satisfaction as a mediating effect towards customers' revisit intention.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Synthesis of Restaurant Quality Attributes

The success of a restaurant depends on understanding the customers' needs and expectations, and then meeting these needs better than the competition. Lee, Back & Kim [8] has indicated in their study that most new operated restaurant fail in the first year of their business due to the failure to ensuring customer satisfaction by providing excellent service, listening to customers' needs and complaints, and caring about the customer. In a restaurant setting, there are many quality attributes that could influence the customers' satisfaction. Previous researches have addressed that food, premise ambience, and service are significant determinants that can

boost guest check averages and also can set the restaurant away from competitors in the consumer's estimation [9; 10]. Food is the most essential part of the overall restaurant experience [11]. Of all the possible determinants of customer satisfaction in restaurants, studies have often found customer satisfaction with food quality to be a powerful predictor of customer intent to return [11, 12; 13]. According to Peri [14], food quality is an absolute requirement to satisfy the needs and expectations of restaurant customers. Although there is no agreement on the individual attributes that constitute food quality, a thorough review of the literature reveals that the general description of food quality among researches focuses on food presentations, healthy options available, taste of food, foods' freshness and food temperature. These attributes serve as tangible cues of service quality in restaurants [15]. The atmosphere of a service setting has been deemed essential in determining customer satisfaction. It has also been established that atmosphere quality can be influential in determining repeat patronage [16]. A restaurant with a concept and theme normally heavily emphasizes their atmospherics, including décor, music, and lighting, as a selling point to customers. Many researchers pay interest to the role of physical environment on customer perception quality [17, 15; 18]. The physical environment can produce feelings of excitement, pleasure, or relaxation. Consequently, various aspects of atmospherics may be used by customers as tangible cues to assess the quality of services provided [15]. However, in a study by Andaleeb and Conway [20], physical design and appearance of the restaurant did not have a significant effect on customer satisfaction. The various atmospheric attributes within a service setting include visual and auditory cues such as function and space, design, color, and music.

Service quality has also been found to be a significant contributing factor in determining customer satisfaction and return intent in business setting [21; 22; 23]. The reason for overwhelming interest in service quality is that both practitioners and academic researchers believe that service quality is crucial to the success of any business organization as the construct affects customer satisfaction, repeat purchase behavior, and ultimately, an organization's profitability [24] and brand evidence [25] service quality as the consumer's evaluation or judgment about the overall services provided. Generally, service quality is viewed as subjective in nature [26] and also an attitude [27]. However, the literature notes that service quality is the subjective evaluative judgment of customers based on the service performance they encounter [28]. According to Brady, Cronin & Brand [29], service quality is driven by three primary service dimensions: interaction quality, physical environment quality and outcome quality. Reliability, responsiveness and empathy are positioned as descriptors of the dimensions.

2.2 Customer Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Customer satisfaction is an important construct that is often the focus of marketing studies [29; 30]). Customer satisfaction is seen as a major contributor to guaranteeing a company's long term profitability, customer retention, and loyalty [31].

Initial studies has revealed that repurchase intention comes with commitment or loyalty. However, even though

repurchase intention is an important part of such behavioral constructs, it should not simply be described by a positive attitude towards a provider. This is because patrons do repeat purchasing behaviors even when there is nonexistence of psychological connection [32]. Hence, in this study, revisit intention is defined as an asserted probability to revisit the foodservice in equally the absence and presence of a positive attitude toward the provider.

Various numbers of studies of customer satisfaction results in the service industry specifies a positive relationship between customer satisfactions and repurchase intention [27; 32; 33; 34]. In examining the linking among quality attributes, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, Getty and Thompson [35], indicated that customer behavioral intentions to recommend and repurchase are positive functions of their perception of satisfaction and service quality. Furthermore, a study conducted by Soderlund and Ohman [36] proposed that customer satisfaction is significantly associated to two specific intention constructs: intentions as expectations and intentions as wants. These studies all provide empirical evidence of a positive relationship between customer satisfactions and revisit intention in the foodservice industry. Satisfied customers are more likely to refuse competitive offers and to repurchase the product or service from the current provider [4; 37].

Based on above literature review the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1 (H1):

Restaurant quality attribute has a significant relationship on customer satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

Restaurant quality attribute has a significant relationship on revisit intention.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Customer satisfaction has a significant relationship on revisit intention.

Hypothesis 4 (P4): Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between quality attribute towards revisit intention.

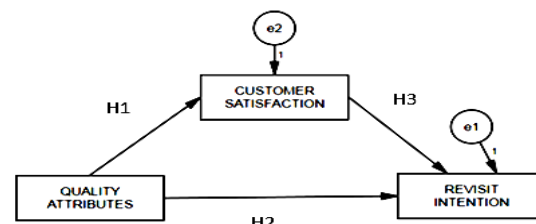


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of mediating role of customer satisfaction in the association between quality attributes and revisits intention.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND INSTRUMENT

This paper reports on the relationship between restaurant qualities attribute on revisit intention mediating by customer satisfaction. A structured survey questionnaire with three parts had been designed with specific questions in order to measure the responses of the respondent related to customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Part A of the questionnaire comprise of the respondent's demographic profile. The purpose of this section was to investigate whether customers

from different demographic variables are motivated by different constructs. Part B of the questionnaire in this study consists of a total of 14 items adapted from the restaurants quality attribute literatures were used to capture the three main factors which is food quality, environment and service quality. The third, Part C included the measurement of the mediating variable that is customer satisfaction, in which sixteen items scales developed by Mak, Sim & Jones was adapted [38]. The items were used to probe the customer's satisfaction level towards the quality attributes developed. All constructs in part B and C were measured with a 5-point, Likert-type, with either strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4) and strongly agree. A part from that the variables consist of customer satisfaction and revisit intention that are closely related to the research objective.

A pilot test was conducted with 40 customers in selected restaurant in Klang Valley area. The result of data analysis indicated that the value of Cronbach's alpha for all of the constructs was greater than 0.70, suggesting that all of the constructs' reliability was acceptable [39]. The survey questionnaire was finalized and distributed.

3.1 Descriptive statistic

The questionnaires were distributed to 300 customers at four participating restaurants. After eliminating the unusable responses, 287 responses were coded for data analysis, resulting in a response rate of 94 percent. Table 1 displays the demographic profile of the study samples.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis

The measurement model was estimated first and then the structural path model was analyzed to test the hypotheses. The data were fitted to a measurement model using AMOS 20.0 to test the reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. The results indicated in Table 2, that the measurement model provided a good fit to the data. The CFI, IFI, TLI, NFI, and RFI values all exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.9 [40]. The RMSEA ranged from 0.04 to 0.08, indicating a satisfactory model fit (Turner and Reisinger, 2001 [41]).

Table 2 : oodness-of-fit indices.

Model	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	IFI	TLI
Measurement	1.25	0.07	0.921	0.902	0.910	0.934	0.991	0.970
Structural Path	1.78	0.06	0.987	0.899	0.945	0.923	0.980	0.970

Note: RMSEA = root mean square of approximation; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; AGFI = adjusted goodness-of-fit index; CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index; IFI =incremental fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index.

4.2 Structural Path Model

A structural model was estimated to validate the proposed theoretical model. As indicated by the path coefficients and associated significance levels (figure 2), the restaurant quality attribute on customer satisfaction were significant ($p < 0.05$) with coefficient 0.890. The finding supported hypothesis 1. The direct effect of restaurant quality attribute on revisit intention remained significant ($\beta = 0.135$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported. The figure also shows the

indirect effect of restaurant quality attribute on revisit intention via customer satisfaction were significant ($\beta = 0.232$, $p < 0.01$), that is hypothesis 3 were supported.

Customer satisfaction partially mediated the association between restaurant quality attribute and revisit intention, suggesting that the restaurant quality attribute could influence revisit intention directly and indirectly, thus confirming Hypothesis 4.

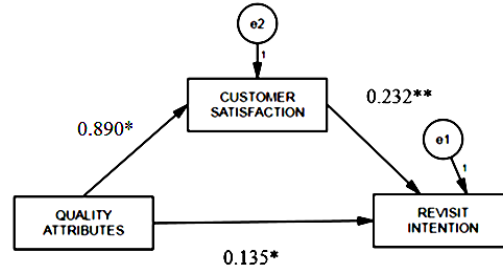


Fig. 2. Result of structural path model testing.
 *Path coefficient is significant at $p < .05$. **Path coefficient is significant at $p < .001$.

As a result from structural equation model, quality attributes were found directly influence customer satisfaction, supporting Hypotheses 1. These results indicated that higher quality in service, atmosphere and food produces more satisfied customers in restaurants, which is consistent with previous studies identifying the relationship between

Characteristics	Frequency (%)
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	128 (43.5)
Female	159 (56.5)
<i>Age</i>	
Younger than 20 years	10 (3.5)
20 to 29 years	103 (37.0)
30 to 39 years	47 (19.9)
40 to 49 years	48 (18.2)
50 to 59 years	24 (7.2)
Older than 60 years	47 (14.1)
<i>Education</i>	
Less than high school	9 (3.0)
High school	44 (14.6)
Some college, but no degree	52 (18.5)
Bachelor's degree	72 (25.6)
Graduate degree(s)	102 (38.3)
<i>Annual Household Income</i>	
Less than RM40,000	73 (28.4)
RM40,000 to RM59,999	53 (20.3)
RM60,000 to RM79,999	48 (18.5)
RM80,000 to RM99,999	29 (19.6)
RM100,000 to RM149,000	32 (11.6)
More than RM150,000	24 (9.6)

perceived quality and customer satisfaction [13; 24; 42; 43; 44]. This finding suggests that the service quality provided by employees, atmosphere and food quality (e.g., taste, menu variety, and healthy food options) are fundamental and critical factors for customer satisfaction in the restaurant business.

Within this research area, several empirical studies have reported the positive relationship between customer satisfactions and revisit intentions [19; 24; 45]. In this research the significant relationship was accepted as the findings showed that there exists a significant and positive relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention. The relationship service quality, customer satisfaction and revisit intention has received considerable attention in other previous literatures [27; 45; 46, 47; 48; 49; 51].

Quality and revisit intention shows the direct effects of service quality, atmosphere and food quality on customer revisit intention and the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on the relationships between quality (service/atmosphere/food quality) and revisit intention. The results indicated that both quality attributes significantly and positively influenced customer revisit intention, supporting Hypotheses 3.

Table 3: Weight Regression

		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	<--- QUALITY ATTRIBUTES	.890	.035	2.530	.011
REVISIT INTENTION	<--- CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	.232	.082	2.819	.005
REVISIT INTENTION	<--- QUALITY ATTRIBUTE	.135	.052	-2.597	.009

5. CONCLUSIONS

The present study was an attempt to explore the relationship between restaurant quality attribute, customer satisfaction and revisit intention. The study has found that the direct associations between restaurant qualities attribute and revisit intention were significant. This means that restaurant quality attributes appear to be the important predictive factors for revisit intention. Which implies that the owner of the restaurants should implement the most appropriate and effective elements in restaurant quality attribute that may influence customer satisfaction and revisit intention.

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