

The Influence of Service Quality and Food Quality Towards Customer Fulfillment and Revisit Intention

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Abstract

The intensely competitive environment existing in the restaurant sector makes it vital for firms to achieve customer satisfaction in order to survive in the long term. Obtaining customer satisfaction means that they become an effective and efficient communication resource, at no cost to the firm. Prominent among the factors that determine the levels of customer satisfaction in the food and beverage contexts are service quality and product quality. Nowadays, Chinese cuisine is becoming more attractive and accepted worldwide. Due to large population of Chinese Muslims in Malaysia, restaurants catered or owned by Chinese Muslims are now increasing and cater to all races in Malaysia. Therefore, the objective of the study is to identify the relationship between service quality and product quality towards customer satisfaction and examine revisit intentions of 9 Chinese Muslim restaurants in Shah Alam, Malaysia. The questionnaire was tested for reliability before being used. Correlation and regression analysis were employed to investigate the relationship between the service and product (food), customer satisfaction and revisit intentions to these restaurants. The findings of this study indicate that service quality and food quality have a significant relationship on customer satisfaction and thus have a significant relationship towards revisit intention. In conclusion, it was found that all customers were satisfied with these restaurants and willing to recommend Chinese Muslim restaurants to their relatives and friends and they were

also willing to revisit this type of restaurant in the future.

Key words: Customer satisfaction; Revisit intention; Food quality; Service quality

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INTRODUCTION

This paper reports on the the relationship between service quality and customers' satisfaction at Chinese Muslim restaurant in Shah Alam. It also discusses the relationship between food quality and customers' satisfaction. Additionally this paper looks at the relationship between customers' satisfaction and revisit intentions at seven different Chinese Muslim restaurants in Shah Alam, Selangor.

Malaysia is a multicultural and multi-ethnic nation and this national trend of diversity is expected to consistently increase (Josiam & Monteiro, 2004; Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007). One reflection of this cultural and ethnic diversity is the variety and prosperity of ethnic restaurants in the Malaysian foodservice market. Malaysian ethnic food market generates 21.8 million ringgit Malaysia in annual sales, around 65% of which is from the foodservice industry (Malaysian Food and Drink Report, 2010). As lifestyles change and dining out becomes more and more ordinary, many customer's desire new flavors and experiences. Among the few studies of ethnic restaurants, topics focused on customers' motivations, selection criteria for eating at an ethnic restaurant, and the role of authenticity in ethnic restaurants (Qu, 1997; Josiam

& Monteiro, 2004; George, 2001; Ebster & Guist, 2004; Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007).

Malaysian Chinese food actually originated from mainland Chinese cuisine but has been influenced by local ingredients and dishes from other cultures though it remains distinctly Chinese. Most of the Chinese meals have pork or non halal stuff amongst their main ingredients, but due to the popularity and unique taste of the Chinese cuisine, a few of the restaurants in Malaysia decided to serve food with halal ingredients but still using the same concept as Chinese cuisine. There are chicken options or other permitted meat available

which can replace pork and thereby make the restaurant Muslim-friendly. The Malays are of the Muslim faith and comprise the majority in peninsular Malaysia. Muslims are forbidden from eating pork but may consume other types of meat if it is slaughtered according to Muslim rites. Due to the large Chinese Muslim population in Malaysia, many Chinese Muslim restaurants cater to, or are run by, Chinese Muslims. However non-Muslims who are Chinese and other races are also going to Chinese Muslim restaurants to experience or to dine at Chinese Muslim restaurants, even though they can eat at Chinese restaurants owned by non-Muslim Chinese.

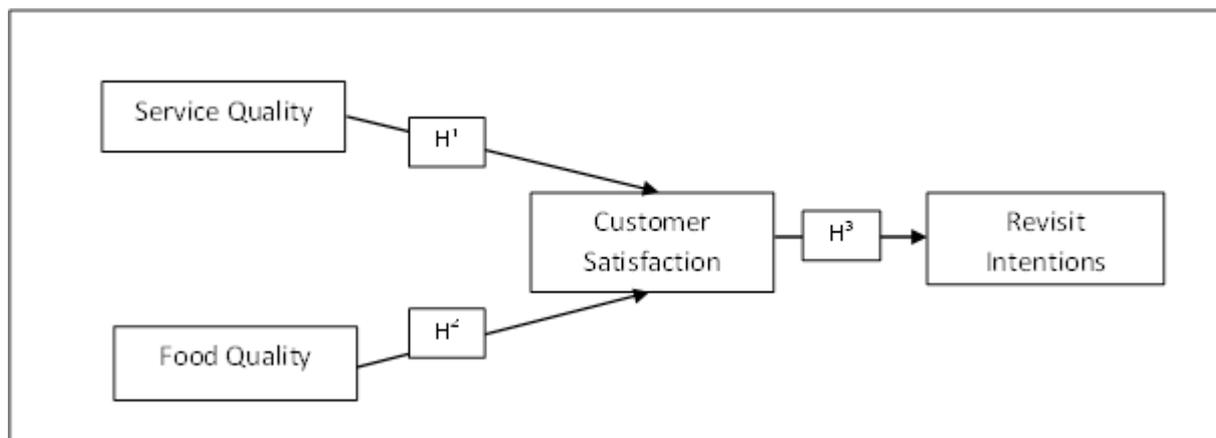


Figure 1
Study Framework

1. PURPOSE/MOTIVATION/PROBLEM STATEMENT OF THE STUDY

Nowadays, Chinese cuisine is becoming more attractive and getting worldwide acceptance. Due to the large population of Chinese Muslims in Malaysia, restaurants catered or owned by Chinese Muslims are now increasing and catering to all races in Malaysia. Chinese restaurants might be common to most people, whereas a Chinese Muslim Restaurant might be unfamiliar for some. Other than that, perceived quality has been one of the most important factors of customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions which are in this case pertain to revisit intentions (Namkung et al., 2007). It would be interesting to know issues of customer satisfaction and revisit intentions. There have been a few researches exploring the key attributes affecting customer satisfaction and revisit intentions in ethnic restaurants, which are of central interest to restaurant operators. Often, perceived quality has been seen as one of the most important factor that determines customer satisfaction and a behavioral intention which is revisit intention in the service industry (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006).

Different customers' satisfaction can be determined in terms of tastes, drives and upbringing. Factors affecting

customer satisfaction is also relevant to other restaurants and businesses. Customers support and satisfaction are credited for the existence and the growth of these restaurants. As a result, understanding each customer's distinct needs is essential for restaurants to maintain and expand their market in this aggressive and competitive environment. Thus, the purpose of this study is to identify the key factors of customer satisfaction in this type of restaurants, namely Chinese Muslim restaurants. Nine Chinese Muslim restaurants in Shah Alam were selected for this study. Moreover, this study also aims to find out the significant relationships between customer satisfaction and customers revisit intentions pertaining to these nine restaurants.

2. METHOD AND MATERIAL

This paper reports on the relationship between restaurant attributes and customer satisfaction towards revisit intention. Based on the objectives of this study which is to identify the nature of relationships and to seek whether there exists positive relations between food quality, service quality and customer satisfaction towards revisit intention, the following hypotheses were developed. The instruments for the study were adapted and were modified based on the instrument used in a previous study by Andaleeb and Conway (2000) and Kivela et al. (1999).

2.1 Research Design

This study employed both quantitative methods which allows for quantitative data be corroborated through qualitative means, Fraenkel and Wallen (2009). Triangulation provides consistency of the results where it fortifies the validity and reliability of the outcomes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). However this paper merely reports on the quantitative outcomes. Quantitative approaches were adopted for this research and it is most appropriate approach to answer all the question. Comparing with this qualitative and quantitative it shows that, the most appropriate to use is quantitative research and have been supported by previous research suit with this research which is applied and using a quantitative research (Kivela et al, 1999; Abdaleeb & Coway, 2006). This studies use quantitative researches which is a study between the relationship of variables, evaluation of demographic information and adapted a questionnaire from several researchers (Oppenheim, 1998; Hashim, 2001).

2.2 Questionnaire

In developing a scale for the questionnaire, the ideal number of points for a numerical interval scale has been considered. Most of the researchers argued that a 5 to 7 point scale is most appropriate when measuring attitudes, behavior or opinions of people (Kano, 1984; Sekaran, 2003; Cooper et al., 2006; Babbie, 2004). The decision about the number of points actually depends on how finely the researcher wants to measure the intensity of the attitude in question and also the size capacity of the population to make fine distinctions between the numbers (Kumar, 2006). Moser and Kalton (1985) argued that the respondents will be unable to place themselves if the scale is divided too finely and if the scale is divided too coarsely, the scale will not differentiate their opinion adequately. In this study, a 7-point interval scale form was chosen to give adequate options to the respondents and they were expected to choose one of the response options.

2.3 Population and Sampling

The respondents of this study were 395 respondents. As a result, 395 customers voluntarily completed the questionnaire and the data collection procedure was administered by using systematic sampling approach at 2 different times in a day across the data collection duration 12.00pm to 3.00pm and 6.00pm to 10.00pm. A total of 35 questionnaires out of 395 were discarded due to more than 50% missing values. According to Sekaran (2003), previous studies suggested a minimum sample size of 350 by considering a 5% accuracy, 95% confidence level and 50% of variability estimated in the population. However over-sampling technique as suggested by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), Sekaran (2003) was carried out to account for uncooperative subjects. A structured group-administered questionnaire using a 7-point scale ranging

from 'strongly disagree to strongly agree', was created to measure the levels of customer satisfaction, food attributes and services attributes. Permission to collect data was obtained from restaurant owners.

3. ANALYSIS/RESULTS

The reliability of each multiple-item scale was denoted by the alpha coefficient. Reliability analyses showed that the internal consistency of each of the four explanatory constructs in the study was relatively high and considered to be very good because, according to Nunnally (1978), the alpha value should be 0.70 or higher. The measurement's reliability was assessed by Cronbach's alpha. The alpha values for the three constructs ranged from 0.84 to 0.92. As shown in Table 2.1, each construct exceeded the minimum requirement of 0.7, ensuring adequate internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978). According to Pallant (2005), Cronbach alpha values are dependent on the number of items in the scale. When there are small number of items in the scale, fewer than ten, Cronbach alpha values can be quite small and Nunnally (1978) recommends a minimum level of 0.7

3.1 Descriptive statistics & analysis

The findings indicate that the respondents' demographic and dining profiles. Among the 360 valid respondents, females accounted for sixty (60) percent of the diners and male respondents, 40%. The average age of the respondent is between 20 and 29 years old. Respondents who are most likely to go to a Chinese restaurant were singles comprising 66%, 22.8% were married, followed by 11.2% who were divorced. The highest number of respondents coming to Chinese Muslim restaurant was graduates mostly from college or university. The customer profile information indicates that the majority of Chinese Muslim customers, patronizing Chinese Muslim restaurants, are college or university graduates whose household incomes are between of three thousand to five thousand ringgit Malaysia.

3.2 The Significant Relationship Between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction

Previous researches have been discussed and they have shown that service quality leads to customer satisfaction (Cronin et al., 2000). Based upon these findings, service quality is an important factor of customer satisfaction (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). In addition to service quality, food quality is also a factor of customer satisfaction (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). As a result, the findings show that there is a significant relationship (p -value =0.044) between service quality and customer satisfaction when it comes to dining in Chinese Muslim restaurant. Thus, the hypothesis H1 is accepted at $\alpha = p$ -value (0.044). There is a direct and positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction as shown in the findings.

3.3 The Significant Relationship Between Food Quality and Customer Satisfaction

The findings revealed that in addition to service quality, several other determinants of customer satisfaction with Chinese Muslim restaurants were examined because service is not the only component involved when dining in restaurants (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006). Food quality also determines customer satisfaction in restaurants (Kivela et al., 1999; Law et al., 2004; Johns & Howard, 1998) and is also tested in this study. The findings show that there is a significant relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction leading to the acceptance of H1. The findings indicate that at $\alpha = p$ -value (0.021), there is a direct and positive relationship between perceived food quality and customer satisfaction and the relationship is both positive and significant.

3.4 The significant relationship Between Customer Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

The relationship service quality, customer satisfaction and revisit intention has received considerable attention in other previous literatures (Brady et al., 2001, 2002; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Meuter et al., 2000; Oliva et al., 1992; Olorunniwo & Hsu, 2006; Olorunniwo et al., 2006; Zeithaml et al., 1996). Within this research area, several empirical studies have reported the positive relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intentions (Cronin et al., 2000; Kivela et al., 1999; Olorunniwo et al., 2006). In this research the significant relationship was accepted as the findings showed that there exists a significant and positive relationship (p -value = 0.012) between customer satisfaction and revisit intention.

Multiple linear regressions were conducted to identify the most dominant variable that influences the customers' satisfaction at Chinese Muslim restaurants. The significance level of 0.01 was used. Factors which were not significant were removed using the regression technique.

The dependent variable was customer satisfaction. The independent variables included the two restaurant attributes which were service quality and food quality. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to assess the direct effect of these two restaurant attributes on customer satisfaction towards the Chinese Muslim restaurants.

The findings showed that the two restaurants attributes positively and significantly affect customer satisfaction. It also displays the model summary of the multiple regression analysis. The R^2 for this regression model was 0.642. This means 64.2% of the variation in the customer satisfaction towards Chinese Muslim restaurants could be explained by the four restaurant attributes. The strongest variable that significantly influenced the satisfaction of Chinese Muslim restaurant' customers was service quality because it obtained the largest standardized coefficient score ($\beta = 0.297$, $p = 0.000$), followed by food quality ($\beta = 0.262$, $p = 0.000$).

As indicated in the findings of correlation analysis there exists a strong correlation between customer satisfaction and revisit intention of customers because its Pearson correlation coefficient was 0.012 at the significant level = 0.05. The findings indicate that the customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.702$, $p = 0.000$) was found to be significantly and positively influencing the customers' revisit intentions when it comes to Chinese Muslim restaurants. The value of R^2 (0.592) implied that this result explained about 59.2% of the total variance in revisit intentions towards Chinese Muslim restaurants.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Service Quality Attributes And Customers' Satisfaction

The score pertaining to the service quality attributes and customer satisfaction is at a satisfactory level. The first research objective and research question of this study proposed to determine whether service quality is an important antecedent of customer satisfaction. It is important to the employees to note that courtesy attitude and knowledge of the menu, generally considered as one of the most significant relationship contributing to the customer satisfaction. Involving in the restaurant industry or business, it could be said that employees or servers who are knowledgeable about the menu and are really aware about the menu usually give a fast feedback and also respond really quickly to customers enquiry or questions efficiently and also it could be considered as a restaurant service attribute.

The service attribute with the consistent service and attentive employees or server will lead the customer to satisfaction and from overall satisfaction; it results as a contributor to revisit intention. Hence, for the restaurant service attribute among atmospherics or environment, environmental cleanliness, interior design adequate parking and lighting were significant predictors at 0.05 levels. Based on the correlation analysis, cleanliness is the most contributing factor in restaurant lead to customer satisfaction and from customer satisfaction had the largest impact on revisit intention, indicating the significance of decor' and adequate parking also gives satisfaction to customer satisfaction for customer revisit.

As for the service restaurants attributes it appears to be one of the crucial parts of Chinese Muslim restaurants' success. Similarly, being a courteous employee or server is one of the customers want to contact as a personnel to their presence when coming to the restaurant. With all this contributor it leads to the significant relationship towards customer satisfaction and giving the most satisfaction to the customers. Fascinatingly, employees' or servers' appearing neat and tidy is strong contributor. Most Chinese Muslim restaurants collect customer feedback about the service customers received in real time, and

furthermore, they attempt to fulfil and enhance service quality based on customer feedback. This strategy enables for the Chinese Muslim restaurants to identify the issues they are confronting and take corrective actions. This study shows that there is a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in Chinese Muslim restaurants and the above objective of the study has been answered.

4.2 Food Quality Attributes and Customers' Satisfaction

Based on the second research objective and research question, the study proposed to examine whether food quality appears to be the basis of Chinese Muslim restaurants' success. Among the most important restaurant attributes, three of them were food related attributes, including taste, food freshness and appropriate food temperature. There exists a significant relationship between food quality and customers' satisfaction which consequently influences customer selection of Chinese Muslim restaurants. Consistent with this finding, providing fresh, tasty, correct food service, food temperature and a variety of food and beverages remains an important criterion for satisfying customers. The finding of this study provides support for Chinese Muslim restaurant managers to develop better strategies to differentiate their services on food quality. The finding of this study determined a significant and positive relationship between food quality and customer satisfaction.

Specifically, food attributes proved to be the most influential attribute on satisfaction among the attributes. Food quality has been generally accepted as a major factor influencing customer satisfaction and post-dining behavioral intention. For example, Dube et al. (1994) measured the relative importance of restaurant attributes in repeat-purchase intention in an upscale restaurant setting and found that food quality was far more important to restaurant customers than all other attributes. Sulek and Hensley (2004) investigated the relative importance of food, physical setting, and service in a full-service restaurant and found that food quality was the most important factor influencing satisfaction and the only factor predicting behavioral intention. Namkung and Jang (2007) evaluated the relationships of individual attributes that constitute food quality (e.g. food presentation, menu variety, healthy options, taste, food freshness and temperature) with customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions.

4.3 Customers' Satisfaction and Revisit Intention.

There exists a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention. Although instinctively higher levels of customer satisfaction should lead to higher levels of customer revisit intentions, the relationship does not always necessarily exist. Consumer indifference, availability of competitive substitutes and low costs of

switching for example may result in a situation where customers are satisfied, yet they defect to other offerings (Solomon, 1996). However this study found that there is a significant or positive relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention. The researchers believe that, assessing customer satisfaction in the full service restaurant industry is a useful. It is also believed that if restaurant owners truly want to gain a competitive edge, they must constantly struggle to increase the levels of customer satisfaction. This can be achieved by emphasizing the two significant factors in customers' satisfaction, thus nurturing their revisit intention.

Consumer indifference, availability of competitive substitutes and low costs of switching for example may result in a situation where customers are satisfied, yet they defect to other offerings (Solomon, 2002). Therefore, while customer satisfaction has a notable impact on repeat visits and positive on revisit intention, customer loyalty is actually required if this restaurant is to remain as one of the preferred restaurant to revisit.

C O N C L U S I O N A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

In conclusion this study provides an understanding of the significant relationship between two variables, namely, customers' satisfaction towards revisit intention. The researchers hope that the findings of this study satisfactorily explain customer satisfaction and that service restaurants should focus on two major elements which are service quality and food quality to enhance customer satisfaction. The results also show that service quality and food quality dimension of restaurant attributes was the most important to customers. The restaurant attributes dimension encompasses all the personal contact attributes of the employees with customers including whether the employees were prompt, courteous, knowledgeable, and neat in appearance, helpful, attentive, and understood customer needs. It is important that employees note that courtesy attitude and knowledge of the menu is generally considered as one of the most significant attribute contributing to the customer satisfaction.

All of the variables such as service, food, atmosphere or environment and price fairness were significantly related with customer satisfaction and revisit intention. The service and food factor emerged as the most important attribute in inducing the revisit intention. The service attribute with the consistent service and attentive employees or servers may lead to overall customer satisfaction and give rise to revisit intention. Hence, customer satisfaction has the biggest impact on revisit intention. Several limitations of the study should be addressed. Future research should investigate the consumer behaviour pertaining to food and service consumption

in more detail and should include a detailed survey of the foodservice employees and price fairness. It is also interesting to find out how the foodservice providers, in this case the Chinese Muslim restaurant owners, understand the differences between their own food cultures and other people's food cultures from an inside-out perspective? Moreover, it is important to find out the cross-cultural factors and their effects on consumers' food consumption and satisfaction. Thus, future research should consider a longitudinal approach, if given sufficient time. It is hoped that this research may reveal the true reason why people dine in a particular restaurant. There may be various reasons for going to a particular restaurant such as forming a business relationship, family gathering or anything else, but this will still remain an assumption until further research is undertaken. It is also believed that it may be possible to provide deeper insight into the factors those full service restaurant owners and managers need to stress in their total offering.

Future research should investigate the consumer behaviour of food and service consumption in more detail and should include a detailed survey of the foodservice employees and price fairness. Particular areas of interest are how consumers define food attributes the extent to which consumers are knowledgeable of Chinese Muslim food culture and what element consumers identify as the most important factors that cause them to behave differently in such an ethnic restaurant, if there is any difference. It is also interesting to find out how the foodservice providers, in this case the Chinese Muslim restaurant owners understand the differences between their own food cultures and other people's food cultures from an inside-out perspective? Moreover, it is important to find out the cross-cultural factors and their effects on consumers' food consumption and satisfaction.

This research was conducted in only at main area which is Shah Alam Selangor, thus may not be generalizable to other places. Therefore, it needs more and wider demographic need to be investigated. It is also suggested that other related factors of employee service quality such as internal and external marketing of the restaurant such as promoting the new menu or restaurant, to be included in the future researches.

Other than that, this study also revealed that there are requirements for further comprehensive research need to be undertaken. It is believed through this comprehensive research it will reveal the true reason why people dine in a particular restaurant. There may be various reason for that purpose for instance business relationship, family gathering or anything else, but this will still remain an assumption until further research are undertaken. It is also believed that it may be possible to provide deeper insight into the factors that full service restaurant owner and managers need to stress in their total offering.

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