Young Adults' Satisfaction towards Hipster Cafes: the Brewing Factors

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Abstract

The ever changing preference and taste in food service industry due to increase in demand causes the market to become competitive in Malaysia. With the emergence of hipster cafes in Malaysia's coffee scene, hipster cafe operators are strategically expanding their wings to capture the market share in order to gain competitive advantage over the competitors. Customers will prefer a hipster cafe which is able to provide better quality of offerings and customer services. This study tested the influence of factors of Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment on Customer Satisfaction. Findings are derived from 150 digital questionnaires administered using emails and iPads at a number of hipster cafes in Klang Valley. Evidently, Restaurant Environment triumphed as the brewing factor that draws the young adults to dine in the hipster cafes.

Keywords: Hipster Cafe, Restaurant Environment, Young Adults, Satisfaction

1. Introduction

The term hipster refers to a person who follows the latest trends and fashions, especially those regarded as being outside the cultural mainstream. It has been sweeping description of what is at the forefront of style, fashion and taste and being used on both people and things. The label has made it easy to put a finger on anything trendsetting, be it music, apparel or a lifestyle offering, and turn it into something that can be bought and sold. This has spurred the growth of businesses, from artisanal cafes to personalized clothiers. In these recent years, trendy boutiques and eateries have moved into Malaysian culture; for example, have turned the once-sleepy shop lot area into a sprawling shopping enclave. The stores, touting heritage as novelty, draw the cool and curious on weekends. Coffee shops are no longer a place where you satisfy your hunger, they have now transformed into avenues for socializing physically and virtually, while satisfying your cravings. Cafes offering "Instagramworthy" homemade and handcrafted food and drinks with old school and vintage vibes are particularly popular among the young adults. Hence, this potent mix of commerce, lifestyle and tastes came to be understood as "hipster". Hipster cafe can be defined as a unique restaurant that is specialized in coffee making and offers food that is different from the other coffee shops. Some of the characteristics that define hipster cafe are generally the following: (1) dim lit shop, (2) unique mismatched decorations such as rusty steel, vintage decors, paintings, Do-It-Yourself stuffs, (3) there is theme or meaning behind each cafe that makes it unique, (4) baristas or waiter/waitress dressed casually or some black uniform, (5) expensive coffee and food, (6) the menus are written mostly on wall or on paper clipboard, (7)

some cafes provide live performance and (8) Wi-Fi facility for patrons to hang out with friends on their mobile gadgets.

2. Problem Statement

Young adults ranging from 18 to 35 years of age are considered as major customers of hipster cafes. The youth's lifestyle pointed out that they are likely to patronize these laid back eateries that will grace their eyes with delectable interior and lavish their taste buds with the most delightful food and dining experience. Recognizing the potential of this market segment has led many cafe operators to remodel, reposition, rebrand and reinvent their cafes interior, exterior, store/brand image and business concept in order to outmaneuver their rivals. Having to dump quite a large sum of money to invest in doing so it is necessary to study on the young adults' needs and wants as well as understand their preferences that influence their satisfaction, as the findings may provide some basis for these cafe operators to focus and refocus their resources efficiently. Due to the rapid evolutions in the global market, hipster cafes are facing intense competition to attract and retain their customers. To succeed in their key business, it is very important for the restaurateurs to concern about the factors that influence customer satisfaction which in turn leads to revisit intention. In this study, three factors have been selected to be tested against customer satisfaction, namely Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment. Of course, there are numerous studies connecting customer satisfaction with other variables such as price, perceived values and situational factors. As in Food Quality, food attributes such as freshness and presentation are the essential sensory elements that interacted with the factors such as taste, smell and sight (Delwiche, 2004; Namkung et. al, 2007). On the other hand, Service Quality, particularly the measure of reliability and responsiveness are more desirable in restaurant context when providing pleasing dining environment to the customers (Andaleeb et. al, 2006). While Restaurant Environment factor has been tested in many studies which proved that making the atmosphere more pleasant and innovative is essential for a firm's success (Reimer and Kuehn, 2005; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). Besides, Kotler (1973) indicated that atmosphere of a restaurant can be as much important as the food itself. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the factors of food quality, service quality and restaurant environment, and how these factors affect customer satisfaction towards hipster cafes among the young adults.

3. Literature Review

This section is devoted to discuss the previous empirical research done in relation to the study. Review of the literature covers variables this study intends to examine; Customer Satisfaction (dependent variable) and independent variables of Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment.

3.1 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction can be defined as an individual's pleasure feeling or disappointment that can result from comparing a product's perceived performance in relation to

his or her expectations (Oliver, 1981; Brady and Robertson, 2001). Moreover, customer satisfaction is an important indicator of a company's past, current, and future performance in order to determine retention of the customers (Lee, 2004). In modeling satisfaction, there are two general conceptualizations of satisfaction namely transaction-specific satisfaction and cumulative satisfaction (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, and Zeithaml, 1993). Transaction specific satisfaction is a transient that customer's evaluation of his or her experience and reactions to a particular service encounter (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Boshoff and Gray, 2004). Alternatively, cumulative satisfaction is a customer's evaluation of the overall consumption experience with a product or service to date, which directly affects post purchase phenomena such as attitude change, repeat purchase, and brand loyalty (Johnson and Fornell, 1991). The following section will discuss the first independent variable to be tested against Customer Satisfaction variable.

3.2 Food Quality

Nowadays, people emphasized on food quality as a fundamental component to satisfy restaurant customers (Rozekhi, Hussin, Siddiqe, Rashid and Salmi, 2016). According to Shaharudin, Mansor and Elias (2011), food quality is becoming a crucial factor that affects the consumer. In this study, focus will be based on two food attributes which are **food freshness** and **food presentation**. Nowadays, consumers are very conscious and aware of the food quality issues. With the health- conscious trend, consumers are more demanding for fresh ingredients instead of chemical components or additives in food processing and food freshness preservation. Consequently, according to Whitehall, Kerkhoven, Freeling and Villarino (2006), fresh food is relatively a current phenomenon in parallel with the consumers' growing awareness of nutrition and quality; therefore, it is an important attribute to be learned by all parties who are involved in the food industries in order to satisfy their customers' needs and wants. Furthermore, due to the changing of eating habit, most of the people love to go out to eat because they are captivated by the appearance of food (Johnson, 2011). Therefore, according to Shaharudin et al. (2011), by successfully presenting a good-looking and well-decorated food can stimulate the customer perception of quality and it will create a good impression in term of the feeling and mood of consumers toward consuming the food in hipster cafe. Second factor to be examined in this study is Service Quality.

3.3 Service Quality

Service quality has become one of the most important issues for restaurant operators in recent years, and there are many research that have been conducted and the results shown that there is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Lim, 2010). Specifically for this study, the key determinants for restaurant service quality need to be identified (Tripathi and Dave, 2016). Other researcher stated that it is especially important to relate these factors with segment such as youth customers (Boo, 2017). Studies further added that most of the customers will start to evaluate the service quality when they are dining in the restaurant, and the perceived service quality is used as an indicator of customer satisfaction towards the restaurant. Due to the intense competition in food service industry, the restaurant operators who are able to provide quality service to their customer will gain a great advantage over their rivals to retain customers and to attain survival and growth (Ryu and Han, 2010). Hence, it is important to measure the

reliability as stated in Tang and Bougoure (2006) that this dimension is the most important factor of service quality in the Malaysian food service industry, and also the **responsiveness** dimension in hipster cafe that emphasizes on speed of service (Jangga, Sahari, and Mohd Basir, 2012). The third factor to be tested in studying customer satisfaction towards hipster cafes is Restaurant Environment.

3.4 Restaurant Environment

Boo (2017) agrees that restaurant environment does an impact on customer satisfaction. Customers pay more attention to the environment issue when they decide which restaurant they want to dine in. The two elements of restaurant environment that are focused in this study are **cleanliness** and **ambient scent.** The important factor that influences the customers' decision is that the dining area of the restaurant must be clean (Sienny and Serli, 2010). Customers today demand a better hygiene food environment because eating safe food will allow people to stay away from food-borne illness (Miles, Braxton, and Frewer, 1999). Besides, Duberg found that if a restaurant that lacks of hygiene concern would give customers a horrible experience towards the restaurant as well as ruin the appetite of customers. This will form a negative impression in the customers' opinions that cannot be erased thus make customers not to revisit to the particular restaurant. Ambient scent of a restaurant is another important issue that must be taken into consideration to attract customers. This is because it can affect customer buying behavior (Fiore, Yah, and Yoh, 2000). Besides, Spangenberg, Crowley, and Henderson (1996) stated that there is an effect of ambient scent on purchase intention. In the work of Madzharov, Block and Morrin (2015), recent studies proved that ambient scents affect consumers' spatial perceptions in retail environments, which in turn influence customers' feelings of power and, thus, product preference and purchasing behavior. Morrin and Ratneshwar (2000) also illustrated that ambient scent can improve evaluation of a particular products that are unfamiliar. Ambient scent of a restaurant is important because it will link to the emotional responses of customers, as documented in the study of Leenders Smidts and El Haji (2016) on how different levels of scent intensity affect shopper's mood, behavior and evaluations in a retail space. As a result, restaurant atmosphere has significant impact on customer's perception toward overall quality of the restaurant, which will directly affect customer satisfaction (Ryu and Jang, 2008). Therefore, it is important for the restaurateur to have a better knowledge and understanding on what customers emphasize in order to provide customers with a better environment when they are enjoying their dishes.

3.5 Proposed Theoretical Framework

After identifying the variables that are relevant to the study, the proposed conceptual theoretical framework consists of Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment as the independent variables, and Customer Satisfaction as the dependent variable.
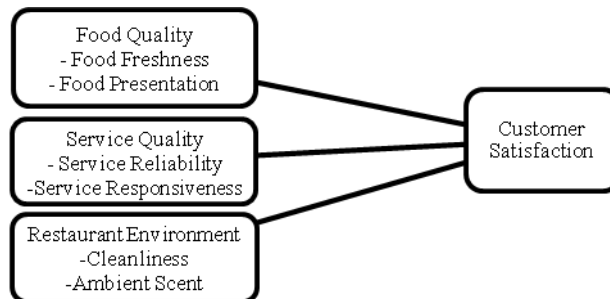

Fig. 1 Proposed theoretical framework

4. Research Questions

There are three (3) research questions needed to be answered in this study;

1) Is there any relationship between independent variables (i.e. Food Quality, Service Quality, and Restaurant Environment) and dependent variable (i.e Customer Satisfaction)? Understanding the nature of these relationships helps hipster cafe operators to expect how these factors can affect customer satisfaction.
2) Which independent variable (i.e. Food Quality, Service Quality, and Restaurant Environment) that has significant influence on customer satisfaction?; (i.e. Food Quality, Service Quality, and Restaurant Environment) that influence Customer Satisfaction? Recognizing a factor that has significant influence can assist hipster cafe operators to devote their resources strategically.
3) [3]   What is the degree of customer satisfaction towards hipster cafe? Having an idea of at what level customer satisfaction provides hipster cafe owners a reality check of how the customers feel about their current offerings.

5. Data Collection Method

This study utilized convenience sampling technique in which a sample size of 200 males and females ranging from 18-35 years of age (who are the customers of hipster cafes in Klang Valley) were selected to participate in the survey. These subjects are selected because they are easiest to recruit for the study and the researcher did not consider selecting subjects that are representative of the entire population. Surely, it would be ideal to test the entire population, but given the limited resources of the researcher,   the population is just too large that it is impossible to include every individual. This is the reason why the researchers rely on convenience sampling, because it is fast, inexpensive, and easy and the subjects are readily available.

E-questionnaire/digital questionnaire was developed using Google Form and randomly distributed through emails and personally administered at different hipster cafes in Klang Valley using iPads. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A is about general information of respondents, Section B is the main construct measurement and Section C is demographic profile of respondents. In Section A, general questions will be asked. It consists of four (4) questions such as "Which meal time do you usually prefer when visiting hipster cafe", "How frequent do you visit hipster café?" and few more items. In Section B, all variables of the study were measured in the form of five-point Likert scale. The purpose of this section is to obtain the required information to examine the relationship among each variable. Table 1 shows the origins of the constructs.

Table 1

Origins of constructs

Construct	Source
Customer Satisfaction	Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012)
	Lim (2010)
Food Quality	
Food Freshness	Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012)
	Namkung and Jang (2007)
	Peneau, Hoehn, Roth, Escher and Nuessli (2006)
Food Presentation	Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012)
	Namkung and Jang (2007)
	Zampollo, Kniffin, Wansink and Shimizu (2011)
Service Quality	
Service Reliability	Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012)
	Forjoe Jnr (2011)
	Ramseook-Munhurrun (2012)
	Tang and Bougoure (2006)
Service Responsiveness	Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012)
	Liu and Jang (2009)
	Ramseook-Munhurrun (2012)
	Tang and Bougoure (2006)
Restaurant Environment	
Cleanliness	Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012)
	Sienny and Serli (2010)
	Katimah, Huey, Sambasivan and Salleh (2011)
Ambient Scent	Han and Ryu (2009)
	Ryu, Lee and Kim (2012)
	Lim (2010)

In Section C, the questions asked about respondents' demographic profile such as gender, age, education level, current year of study and also monthly income which includes pocket money. It helps to identify the profiles of respondents. For Section A and C, the questions were set in the form of multiple choices. Respondents are required to select one answer from the alternatives given. In this research 200 copies of questionnaire were distributed. However, only 150 copies were successfully responded to and usable.

5. Findings

Data collected from 150 respondents were analyzed using Statistical Package for Society Science (SPSS) Version 20.0 software. Data analysis methods used to address this study's research questions were Descriptive Statistics, Reliability Test, Pearson Correlation and Regression.

1.1 Descriptive Statistics

In Table 2, it is recorded that majority of the customers who patronized hipster cafes are female (61.3 percent), aged ranging from 21 to 25 years old (62.7 percent) with bachelor's degree educational background (53.3 percent) with monthly income (including pocket money) of less than RM500 (43.3 percent).

Table 2

Demographics statistics

Item	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	38.7
	Female	61.3
Age	18-20 years old	26
	21-25 years old	62.7
	26-30 years old	6.7
	31-35 years old	4.7
Education level	SPM	9.3
	STPM	4.7
	Diploma	21.3
	Bachelor's degree	53.3
	Postgraduate	11.3
Monthly income	<RM500	43.3
	RM501-RM1000	17.3
	RM1001-RM2000	12.7
	RM2001-RM3000	13.3
	RM3001-RM4000	8.7
	>RM4000	4.7

Table 3 depicts that 42.7 percent of the respondents visit hipster cafes at dinner time, with 92 percent of them dine in a hipster cafe one to two times in a week. 33.3 percent of them spent between RM11 to RM15 each time they visit a hipster cafe. Further statistics report that 55.3 percent of them visit hipster cafe mainly because of its coffee and food offerings.

Table 3
Respondents' general information

Item	Category	Percentage
Meal time	Breakfast	1.3
	Lunch	14.7
	Snack	41.3
	Dinner	42.7
Visit frequency	1-2 times per week	92
	3-4 times per week	6.7
	5-6 times per week	1.3
Spending per visit	<RM5	4
	RM5-RM10	27.3
	RM11-RM15	33.3
	RM16-RM20	17.3
	>RM20	18
Reason to visit	Special occasion	16.7
	Close to my place	4
	Entertainment	20
	Time saving	4
	Coffee and food	55.3

Table 4 illustrates that all independent variables (Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment) have strong positive relationship with the dependent variable (Customer Satisfaction), recorded at 0.636, 0.725 and 0.792 respectively.1.3 Regression

Regression analysis is used in this study to determine whether the independent variables (Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment) have significant influence on the dependent variable (Customer Satisfaction). Hence, this analysis will provide answer for the second research question.

Table 5
Model summary

Model	R	R²	Adjusted R²	SE of the estimate
1	0.825a	0.68	0.674	0.34286

a. Predictors: (Constant), Food Quality, Service Quality, Restaurant Environment

Table 5 displays the regression analysis; the adjusted r-square (R^2) shows that 67.4 percent of the variance in the dependent variable (i.e. Customer Satisfaction) is explained by the independent variables (i.e. Food Quality, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment). The remaining 32.6 percent of the variance in the customer satisfaction can be explained by other factors which are not considered in this study. Therefore, further study can be done to explain more of the variance in the customer satisfaction towards hipster cafes.

Table 6
Regression analysis

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p
Customer Satisfaction	0.578	0.231		2.502	0.013
Food Quality	0.128	0.076	0.115	1.670	0.097
Service Quality	0.242	0.072	0.257	3.341	0.001
Restaurant Environment	0.499	0.066	0.532	7.549	0.000
Adjusted R²	0.674				
F	103.470				

Note: Dependent Variable Customer Satisfaction

From Table 6, the independent variables (Restaurant Environment, Service Quality and Food Quality) have the p-value of 0.000, 0.001 and 0.097 respectively. Hence, it is safe to say that Restaurant Environment and Service Quality have statistically significant influence on customer satisfaction as their p-values are less than 0.05. From the Standardized Coefficients (Beta) column, the value for Restaurant Environment, Service Quality and Food Quality are 0.532, 0.257 and 0.115 respectively.

As a result, we can interpret the following; (1) for every one unit increase in Restaurant Environment variable, it can lead to an increase of 0.532 unit in Customer Satisfaction; (2) for every one unit increase in Service Quality variable, it will result in an increase of 0.257 unit in Customer Satisfaction; and (3) for every one unit increase in Food Quality variable, it is expected that there will be an increase of 0.115 unit in Customer Satisfaction. Evidently, Restaurant Environment variable had come to be the strongest independent variable that influences customer satisfaction with beta value of 0.532.

Table 7
Mean analysis for Customer Satisfaction variable

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Customer Satisfaction	150	1.67	5	4.3833	0.60007
Valid N (listwise)	150				

In Table 7, the questions pertaining to customer satisfaction is recorded using Likert scale of 5 points. Where 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree. From mean analysis, it is found that the level of customer satisfaction is 4.38 which falls between 4=Agree and 5=Strongly Agree. Therefore, it appears that the degree of customer satisfaction towards hipster cafes is high.

6. Conclusion

In a nutshell, Service Quality and Restaurant Environment are the deciding factors for customers to have a satisfactory dining experience at hipster cafes. Hence, hipster cafe operators should emphasize on improving or preserving their service quality and restaurant environment in order to stay relevant to their customer base and keep their rivals at bay. Nevertheless, the term hipster itself connotes that the person is keeping up with the latest trends and fashions, especially those regarded as being outside the cultural mainstream. With the rise of hipster culture in Malaysia, particularly in the Klang Valley, there is a shift of focus towards the aesthetics of a cafe's outlook from just places where people stop for food and drinks, with simple decor, functional interior and modestly plated food that served its purpose to a place where people associates their lifestyle with and something that can define themselves. What really deserves a mention is how these hipster cafes not only sell food but are also offering a more wholesome stay to their customers as well. They pride themselves on being unique, making their customers feel the comfort of home and visually stimulating them in order to create a one-of-a-kind experience that will leave them pinning and returning for more.

7. Implications of the study

With rapid growth of food service industry nowadays, particularly in coffee shop market, hipster cafe operators are facing challenges in identifying the factors that might jeopardize consumer satisfaction towards their cafes. Thus, it is important for hipster cafe owners to foster better understanding and knowledge on factors that actually influence customer satisfaction. By understanding the factors that are affecting customer satisfaction, they can plan and develop sensible business strategies in order to meet and satisfy the customer expectation. In addition, after acquiring useful knowledge in understanding their target customers, they can now gain competitive advantage to combat their rivals in the quest to grab the biggest slice of market share pie.

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