THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SERVICE QUALITY, RELATIONSHIP QUALITY, PERCEIVED VALUE, AND PERCEIVED PRICE TOWARDS REPURCHASE INTENTION IN THE FAST FOOD INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

The fast food restaurant industry has become a subject to intense competition and rapid growth in Malaysia's economy. Consequently, repurchase intention become crucial especially in the fast food business, as it relates to company's profits. Only a few studies in Malaysia were found in the literature, which deal with university students' perceptions about fast food restaurant services. Therefore, it is necessary to study the needs of the university students and to understand their preferences. This study examined the relationship between service quality, relationship quality, perceived values, and perceived price towards repurchase intentions. Besides that, the study also examined customer satisfaction as a mediating role in order to fill the gap in the previous studies. A total of 372 responses were obtained from students of three universities in Shah Alam, through questionnaires. Data were analysed with multiple regression by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 2.0. The findings showed that relationship quality is the main predictor of customer satisfaction (β=.369, p<.01) followed by assurance (β=.165, p<.01), perceived price (β=.162, p<.01) and food quality (β=.102, p<.05). The least predictor is perceived value (β= -.027), tangibility (β=0.53) and responsiveness (β=0.83). The findings also showed that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between

assurance, food quality, relationship quality, perceived price and repurchase intention. The implications of the study are further discussed in this paper.

Keywords: *customer satisfaction, perceived price, perceived value, relationship quality, repurchase intention, fast food restaurant, university student.*

INTRODUCTION

The fast food industry has become popular in recent years. In many countries, fast food restaurants can be found everywhere and are expected to be expanding and growing over the years. The hectic lifestyle in the modern world results in an increasing number of people who choose fast food as their regular dining choice. People with busy working hours rely on the advantages of fast food restaurant. Restaurants serve their food fast, cheap and easy to be eaten as compared to cooking at home. Kim, Hertzman, and Huang (2010) stated that due to the relatively inexpensive cost and quick convenient service, fast food restaurants have become 'home away from home' for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

In Malaysia, there are a lot of challenges faced by fast food restaurant operators especially in getting accepted by the consumers due to cultural mismatches (Habib, Dardak & Zakaria, 2011). On the other hand, Pingali (2006) stated that in Malaysia, fast food is increasingly embraced by many because of the tendency of Malaysian to adopt western food such as fried chicken and burgers. Chris, Hazrina and Asad (2011) supported that Western food is accepted especially for students and office workers. As a result, the industry is becoming more competitive throughout the years.

According to Knutson (2000), the most popular category of consumers that consumes fast food is university students where college life and fast food both go together in their lifestyle. Kueh and Voon (2007) said that university students consider their busy lifestyle that made them become the major contributors to the fast food industry. The possible reason for this is that fast food restaurants provide convenience, time - saving and relaxing dining experience. It is a time-saving product where students can just order at the counter or drive-thru lane whenever they like. This will save more

time as it cuts off their prepare-time for meals or waiting for the food to be served. Other than that, fewer choices at their cafeteria have also become the reason why students choose fast food restaurants instead. Besides, fast food restaurants are accessible, and the location is nearer to the campus. Yardimci, Ozdogon, Ozcelik, & Surucuoglu (2012) confirmed that the rate of university students visiting fast food restaurants is very high which reaches about 98%. Therefore, it is necessary to study the needs of the students and to understand their preferences. The study enables to examine customer satisfaction and intention to repurchase at fast food restaurants.

Usually, consumers buy any products or services when they feel satisfied. However, in the fast food industry, many elements can make customers feel satisfied. One of the elements is service quality. Lim (2010) affirmed that there is a relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. In recent years, service quality has also become a major issue in fast food industry. Due to that many studies on service quality and customer satisfaction in the fast food industry have been conducted (Brady, Robertson & Cronin, 2001; Gilbert, Veloutsou, Goode & Moutinho, 2004; Qin & Prybutok, 2008; and Huam, Seng, Thoo, Rasli & Abd Hamid, 2011).

Perceived value and perceived price are also important elements that must be taken into consideration to attract customers. Customers often use price as a guide in assessing their experience with a product (or service) and in shaping their attitude towards service providers (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Varki & Colgate, 2001). It is the customers' judgement that encodes whether the price is appropriate for the product or service they received. However, the study on the effects of these variables on repurchase intention in fast food restaurant industry is surprisingly limited.

The literature has highlighted many studies that focus on the quality of service in fast food restaurants. To bridge the research gap, this study will reveal the effect of service quality, relationship quality, perceived value and perceived priced toward repurchase intention. Besides that, this study will also reveal the role of satisfaction as the mediator on the relationship between service quality, relationship quality, perceived value, perceived price and repurchase intention. This study was conducted in Shah Alam as this area consists of a sufficient number of university students as the respondents.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service quality is an instrument that has been widely discussed and accepted in many industries. Service quality consists of five dimensions namely responsiveness, empathy, assurance, tangibility, and reliability (Parasuraman, 1985). According to Zeithaml (1988), it is the customers' judgement on the excellence and superiority of the service of an organisation. Customers measure their experience when interacting with employees of the company. The response provided by the employee will be assessed by the customer. Responsiveness can be characterised as to which service providers are willing to accommodate customers and provide timely service. Armstrong (2012) defined responsiveness is the eagerness to assist clients and offer quick service. This would lead to customer satisfaction as they will give positive feedback and tell their acquaintances about the restaurant (Akbar & Parvez, 2009). Empathy can be characterised as to which service providers are caring and being considerate towards their customers. Parasuraman (1985) mentioned that empathy is how the organisation cares and concerns about customer's feelings. Assurance is characterised as to which service provider has the decency of being courteous and their ability to convey trust to the customers. It implies restaurants which have very well-mannered, understanding, and friendly employees. Tangibility is characterised as physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of the workforce that are adequate. Modern looking equipment, well-dressed workers, physical facility, and materials are apparently appealing, which includes the tangibility of fast food restaurants. Reliability is characterised as a guaranteed service is performed accurately and precisely. It relates to handling customer complaints and provides excellent service in the given time. In the fast food industry, it is referred to as providing service on-schedule food delivery and fair charges for customers' meals. Food quality is characterised as to which restaurant provides fresh, clean, tasty, healthy and presentable food (Qin, Prybutok & Zhao, 2010).

On the relationship quality, three dimensions have been applied in various contexts, which are trust, commitment, and satisfaction (Rauyruen & Miller, 2007). Willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence can be defined as trust (Moorman, 1992). The trust has existed when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. This will bring more positive outcomes to both sides. In terms

of satisfaction or more specifically, relationship satisfaction is a cumulative construct that captures the customers' global evaluation of fulfilment in the relationship based on everything that encounters with the service firm rather than a single episodic transaction (Storbacka, Strandvik & Gronroos, 1994; Andreassen & Lindestad, 1998).

Zeithaml (1988) defined perceived value as the perception of the customer and the result of their personal comparison between the perceived sacrifices or costs paid by the customer and perception of overall benefits. It involves their past experienced and current perception towards the service. Perceived value should be viewed as customer evaluation especially on money and time invested in the fast food restaurant in comparison to the customers' experiences. According to Olshavsky (1985), the most effective way to understand perceived value of a brand is to search the reason why people purchase.

Perceived price is described as 'the customer's judgement about a service's average price in comparison to its competitors' (Chen, Gupta, & Rom, 1994). The researchers said the concept is based on the nature of the competitive pricing approach. It focuses on the concerns of customers about whether their competitors charge more or about the same. This perceived price includes monetary as well as non-monetary prices, including consideration of non-monetary costs such as time and effort for the consumer (Zeithaml, 1988).

Oliver (1981) defined customer satisfaction as a consumer's fulfilment response. It is the decision of careful thought of a product or the service itself, which is able to provide a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment. In other words, it is the overall level of satisfaction with a product or service experience. An organisation depends on customer satisfaction. It influences repurchase intentions and behaviour which in return leads to an organisation's future revenue and profits. Henkel, Houchaime, Locatelli, Singh, Zeithaml and Bittner (2006) found that customers will increase their intention to repurchase and revisit again to the same company if they are satisfied with the service provided. In the fast food industry, satisfaction with food is the most crucial aspect. This is because, in business, the customer has the greatest influence and impact on the business (Khan, 2012).

Repurchase intentions are driven by one's past purchase experience. As for willingness to pay more, it is defined by Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) as the likelihood of a consumer to pay more than a competitor's charge to pursue a product or service. Restaurant industry is a highly competitive industry (Gregoire, Shanklin, Greathouse, & Tripp, 1995), it is essential for restaurant operators to have a deep understanding of the attributes of favourable post-dining behavioural intentions. The attributes such as saying good feedback about the restaurant, recommending the restaurant to others and repeat purchasing can provide useful guidance to restaurant operators to attract and retain customers (Liu & Jang, 2009).

Kim *et al.* (2009) revealed that the service quality has a strong relationship with customer satisfaction in the context of food services. They found that five restaurant dimensions namely food quality, service quality, price and value, atmosphere and convenience have a significant impact on the overall satisfaction of customers. In addition, Liu and Jang (2009) found food quality (taste, food safety, and menu variety and food presentation), service reliability, environmental cleanliness, internal design, and clean, well-dressed staff had a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

Satisfaction with the relationship is considered to be the key dimension of relationship quality because it has been demonstrated that more satisfied buyers have a higher quality relationship (Dorsch, Swanson & Kelley 1998). Dwyer and Oh (1987) stated that as customer satisfaction increases, the customer will likely maintain the relationship. This is because they believe it is important enough to warrant the effort, they may be willing to sacrifice short term benefits, in order to achieve long term gains. Leu and Hsieh (2000) found that relationship quality has a significant influence on customer usage quantity, loyalty, product purchase intentions, and word of mouth. The findings indicate that higher customer satisfaction with relationship quality creates a positive effect on the customer's view.

It is highlighted in the literature that perceived value has a relationship with customer satisfaction Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000; Eggert & Ulaga, 2002). Furthermore, Ryu, Han and Kim (2008) found that quick-casual restaurant image significantly influences customer perceived value, which significantly influenced customer satisfaction. It was revealed that overall quick-casual restaurant image, customer perceived value, and customer satisfaction were significant predictors of customer's behavioural intention.

On the other hand, price is also a predictor for customer satisfaction (Bolton & Lemon, 1999). Customer perception of price fairness/unfairness (payment equity) significantly affects their overall satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Varki & Colgate, 2001). Mittal and Kamakura (2001) stated that the satisfaction-repurchase relationship can display variability due to three main reasons. Firstly, it includes the satisfaction threshold, which consists of satisfied consumers who have different levels of repurchase due to their different characteristics. Secondly, the responses are biased in such a way that ratings obtained from the survey may not represent the true picture due to the different characteristics of consumers. Thirdly, it is nonlinearity, which means that the satisfaction-repurchase function may be nonlinear and vary for different consumers. The researchers also indicated that establishing a direct link between repurchase and satisfaction ratings has not been easy for many organisations. Hunt (1991) found that satisfaction was often regarded as the mediating variables of post-purchase behaviour, linking the beliefs of a prior selection of products to cognitive architecture, consumer communication and repurchase intention.

Zeithaml *et al*. (1996) and Cronin and Taylor (1992) investigated the relationship between service quality and repurchase intention and found that the relationships are significant and positively directed. Boulding, Kalra, Staelin and Zeithaml (1993) stated that hotel customers show that perceptions of service quality had a positive effect on intended behaviour. Dagger, Sweeney, and Johnson (2007) also found the same result in the context of health services. Hence, it shows that service quality has an influence on a customer's repurchase intention.

According to Sweeney and Soutar (2001), perceived value occurs at various stages of the purchase process, including the pre-purchase stage. The researcher also showed that perceived value has a positive effect on behavioural intentions. This shows in online shopping research where researchers Lien, Wen, and Wu (2011) showed that perceived value has a positive effect on repurchase intention. Wang (2010) also said that perceived value has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The greater quality of the product, higher customer satisfaction is seen, which leads to stronger repurchase intention and more willingness to recommend others. Although the literature addresses different industries or scales, however, the opinions are similar.

Most researchers agreed that perceived price is an important determinant of post-purchase behaviours for customers as well as highlighted the importance of perceived value, which is highly related to perceived price, which would also lead to research that has investigated the influence of perceived price on consumer behaviours in the service industry. Price fairness research suggests a positive relationship between perceived price and repurchase intentions (Garbarino & Maxwell, 2010; Grewal, Ailawadi, Gauri, Kopalle, & Robertson, 2011; Xia & Monroe, 2010). A research conducted by Heriyati and Budharani (2018) examined the important interrelationship between price perception, performance, and satisfaction on consumer impact in online shopping experience and online repurchase intention showed result price perception has effect repurchase intention. Du Plessis and Rousseau (2007) and Monroe (2012) perceive relative price as the consequence of the purchase making which seems to be fair and worthwhile. However, research on price sensitivity by Uslu and Huseynli (2018) price has negative influence towards repurchase intention.

On the basis of the variables stated above, the hypotheses guiding this study propose the following:

H1: Tangibility positively influences customer satisfaction.
H2: Reliability positively influences customer satisfaction.
H3: Responsiveness positively influences customer satisfaction.
H4: Assurance positively influences customer satisfaction.
H5: Empathy positively influences customer satisfaction.
H6: Food quality positively influences customer satisfaction.
H7: Relationship quality positively influences customer satisfaction.
H8: Perceive value positively influences customer satisfaction.
H9: Perceive price positively influence customer satisfaction
H10: There is a relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.
H11: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between tangibility and repurchase intention.
H12: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between reliability and repurchase intention.
H13: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between responsiveness and repurchase intention.
H14: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between assurance and repurchase intention.

H15: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between empathy and repurchase intention.

H16: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between food quality and repurchase intention.

H17: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between relationship quality and repurchase intention.

H18: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceive value and repurchase intention.

H19: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceive price and repurchase intention.

METHODOLOGY

Correlational research design was used in this study to examine the relationship between variables: service quality, relationship quality, perceived value, perceived price, customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The respondents consisted of university students from UiTM Shah Alam, Universiti Selangor (UNISEL) and Management & Science University (MSU) who have experience in the fast food restaurants. The questionnaires were distributed to 384 respondents and out of the total, 372 questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 96.90%.

The questionnaire was developed based on previous studies - service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Qin & Prybutok, 2008 and Stevens, Knutson, & Patton, 1995), relationship quality (Roberts, Varki, & Brodie, 2003) and Walter, Muller, Helfert, & Ritter, 2003), perceived value (Qin & Prybutok, 2008 Stamer & Diller, 2006), perceived price (Stamer & Diller, 2006; Andaleebb & Conway, 2006; Clemmer & Schneider, 1996; Brady & Cronin, 2001; Emerson & Grimm, 1996), customer satisfaction (Qin & Prybutok, 2008; Andaleeb & Conway, 2006) and repurchase intention (Boulding *et al*., 1993; Hsu, Chang, Chu, & Lee, 2014). The questionnaire was divided into four parts, Section A consists of the questions on demographic information namely gender, age, race, education level, fast food restaurant selection, frequency visit and how many they have spent for a meal in the chosen fast-food restaurant. Section B focuses on the dimensions of service quality (25 items), relationship quality (six items), perceived value (five items), and perceived price (four items). Section C

focuses on customer satisfaction (five items) and Section D on repurchase intention (four items). The instrument was pilot tested and produced high Cronbach's alpha ranging from .696 to .950.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondent's Profile

Variables	Description	Frequencies	Percentages
Gender	Male	118	31.7
	Female	254	68.3
Age	Below 21 years old	121	32.5
	21-30 years old 238	238	64.0
	31- 40 years old	11	3.0
	41- 50 years old	2	5
Race	Malay	307	82.5
	Chinese	12	3.2
	Indian	43	11.6
	Others	10	2.7
University	UiTM Shah Alam	122	32.8
	UNISEL	128	34.4
	MSU	122	32.8
Education	Diploma	149	40.1
	Degree	189	50.8
	Master's degree	29	7.8
	Ph.D	5	1.3
Restaurant	McDonald	191	51.3
	KFC	110	29.6
	Pizzahut	30	8.1
	Subway	33	8.9
	Others	8	2.2
Frequency visit	1-2 times per month	140	37.6
	3-4 times per month	156	41.9
	5-6 times per month	34	9.1
	More than 7 times per month	42	11.3

Table 1 shows that 118 (31.7%) respondents were male and 254 (68.3%) respondents were female. It also shows the highest respondents' age between 21-30 years old 238 (64.0%) followed by age below 21 years old 121 (32.5%). Another 11 (3%) respondents were aged 31-40 years old and the remaining were two (5%) respondents at age 41-50 years old. Majority respondents are Malay (82.5%) followed by Indian (11.6%), Chinese (3.2%) and others (2.7%). In the context of university, UNISEL has the highest respondents which consist of 128 (34.4%). UiTM and MSU had the same number of respondent and constituted 122 respondents (32.8%). Most of the respondents had Degrees for their highest education level at 50.8% followed by those with Diploma 40.1%, 7.8% had Masters' degree and the rest was PhD 1.3%. Regarding the favourite fast food restaurant by respondents, 51.3% were McDonald, followed by KFC 29.6%, Subway 8.9%, Pizza Hut 8.1%, and others that did not mention what the fast food restaurant were 2.2%. The highest frequency visited by the respondents is three to four times per month (41.9%), followed by one to two times per month (37.6%), more than seven times per month (11.3%) and five to six times per month (9.1%).

Table 2: Results of Correlation and Reliability Analyses

No	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Assurance	3.65	0.62	(.847)								
2 Responsiveness	3.68	0.67	.600**	(.818)							
3 Tangibility	3.95	0.57	.454**	.470**	(.763)						
4 Food quality	4.06	0.68	.355**	.317**	.376**	(.757)					
5 Relationship quality	3.75	0.64	.531**	.522**	.411**	.541**	(.830)				
6 Perceived value	3.56	0.66	.440**	.454**	.305**	.396**	.636**	(.849)			
7 Perceived price	3.62	0.62	.451**	.409**	.332**	.364**	.618**	.690**	(.642)		
8 Customer satisfaction	3.87	0.62	.532**	.485**	.402**	.454**	.659**	.486**	.534**	(.836)	
9 Repurchase intention	3.88	0.66	.446**	.394**	.319**	.415**	.617**	.450**	.510**	.777**	(.845)

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed) N=372

Cronbach's alpha shows the significance value for all the variables indicates that the study is reliable since all the values are range from .642-.849. The correlation coefficient indicates there is a positive relationship between independent variable, mediator variable and dependent variable. All the independent variables (assurance, responsiveness, tangibility, food quality, relationship quality, perceived value and perceived price) have significantly correlated with mediator variables (customer satisfaction and dependant variables (repurchase intention) with r-values ranging from .305 to .777. The highest correlation between independent variable and mediator variable is relationship quality and customer satisfaction (r=.659, p<0.01). All the variables are correlated with repurchase intention with the highest correlation which is customer satisfaction (r=.777, p=0.01) and the lowest tangibility with value r=.319, p<0.01.

Table 3: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis (Service Quality Dimension, Perceived Value, Perceived Price and Relationship Quality, and Customer Satisfaction)

Independent variables	Dependent Variable Customer Satisfaction
	Beta values
Assurance	.165**
Responsiveness	.083
Tangibility	.053
Food quality	.102*
Relationship quality	.369**
Perceived value	-0.27
Perceived price	.162**
R	.715
R Square (R²)	.512
Adjusted R2	.502
F value	54.505
Sig F Values	000
Durbin Watson	1.919

Table 3 shows the results of multiple regression analysis between independent variables (assurance, responsiveness, tangibility, food quality, relationship quality, perceived value and perceived price) and mediating variable (customer satisfaction). The regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of assurance, responsiveness, tangibility, food quality, relationship quality, perceived value and perceived price on customer satisfaction. The results show that the R2 value is .512 and the F value is 54.505 with significant .000. Durbin Watson value at 1.919 which shows it is within the acceptance range (value in between 1.5-2.5). This indicates no auto-correlation. The results indicate that relationship quality is the main predictor of customer satisfaction (β=.369, p<.01) followed by assurance (β=.165, p<.01), perceived price (β=.162, p<.01) and food quality (β=.102, p<.05). The least predictor is perceived value (β= -.027), tangibility (β=0.53) and responsiveness (β=0.83). Therefore, H4 (assurance), H6 (food quality) H7 (relationship quality) and H9 (perceived price) were all supported.

Table 4: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis (Service Quality Dimension, Perceived Value, Perceived Price and Relationship Quality, Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intention)

	Dependent Variable Repurchase Intention		Remarks
	Without Mediator	With Mediator	
	Beta	Beta	
Assurance	.115*	.009	Complete Mediation Effect
Responsiveness	.024	-.029	No Mediation Effect
Tangibility	.004	-.030	No Mediation Effect
Food quality	.096*	.031	Complete Mediation Effect
Relationship quality	.391**	.154**	Complete Mediation Effect
Perceived value	-.033	-.016	No Mediation Effect
Perceived price	.193**	.089	Complete Mediation Effect
Customer Satisfaction		.642**	
R	.654	.793	
R2	.427	.628	
Adjusted R2	.416	.620	
F Change	38.783	196.369	
Sig F change	.000	.000	
Durbin Watson		1.856	

The results indicate that customer satisfaction is established to significantly mediate the relationship between relationship quality and repurchase intention ($\beta=.154$, $p<.01$). It also shows relationship quality has significant relationship with repurchase intention ($\beta=.391$, $p<0.1$), and food quality and repurchase intention ($\beta=.096$, $p<0.5$). Perceived price and assurance also show significant relationship with repurchase intention ($\beta=.193$, $p<0.1$); ($\beta=.115$, $p<0.5$). Responsiveness ($\beta=-.024$), tangibility ($\beta=-.004$) and perceived value ($\beta=-.033$) have no relationship with customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.

As stated in Table 4, though there has been a decrease in beta value of assurance from $\beta=.115$ to $\beta=.009$ there is still a significant relationship between the data. Therefore, customer satisfaction is a mediator for the relationship between assurance and repurchase intention. Similarly, to food quality and perceived price, the beta value decreases but is still considered as having a complete mediator relationship with customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The beta value of relationship quality has also decreased but is still significant. It can be summarised that customer satisfaction has a complete mediation effect with repurchase intention.

The result of responsiveness shows negative beta value. This indicates that customer satisfaction has no mediation effect on the relationship between responsiveness and repurchase intention. Similarly, the result of tangibility shows negative beta value. This can be concluded that customer satisfaction has no mediation effect in the relationship between tangibility and repurchase intention. Overall, customer satisfaction has a significant relationship with repurchase intention ($\beta=.642$, $p<0.1$). Therefore, H10, H14, H16, H17 and H19 were all supported. However, results show H11, H13, and H18 were not supported.

The research findings support hypothesis H10 (There is a relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention). Spreng, Havel and McKoy (1995), found consistency in finding a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. Liu and Jang (2009) stated friendly and helpful employees can please the customer and enhanced the level of satisfaction due to the students' satisfaction with the service given by the service provider, they would like to come again in the future. Wang (2010) indicated that customer satisfaction boasts significant

influence on repurchase intention. The research mentioned that if a customer is satisfied with the service, it will encourage them to revisit the restaurant. However, the research findings do no not support hypothesis H11 (customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between tangibility and repurchase intention). In the same study conducted by Wang (2010), the result shows tangibility is the strongest attribute. Which means, according to customer feedback, physical facilities offered by the restaurant service provider are up to date.

Though there has been a reduction in beta value in assurance attributes, the research findings support hypothesis H14 (customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between assurance and repurchase intention). A study conducted by Ahmed, Nawaz, Usman, Shaukat, and Ahmed (2010), revealed a significant and positive relationship between assurance and customer satisfaction. This means that most employees of the restaurant are not courteous and trustworthy.

According to Kivela, Inbakaran and Reece (1999) healthy nutritious food is the main factor in customer satisfaction and to repurchase in the future. This is agreed by Namkung and Jang (2007) where food quality is an important component of the operation of any restaurant. Therefore, it influences customer satisfaction and future purchase intention. Based on the results, the research findings support hypothesis H16 (customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between food quality and repurchase intention).

High quality relationships are more satisfying with the roles assumed and performed by individual parties (Crosby, 1990). According to Kim *et al.* (2009) effective use of relationship management increases customer satisfaction and thereby increases repurchase intention. Therefore, from the result, the research finding supports hypothesis H17 (customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between relationship quality and repurchase intention). Qin and Prybutok (2008) investigated the role of the pricing when talking about fast food consumers and they discovered that the price did not play such an important role. This is because fast food products are cheaper as compared to other restaurant products. Price plays an important role in attracting young people as they have a lower income. Therefore, this study shows that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived price and repurchase intention. Nevertheless, the price

of a product plays an important role in students, where lower price, means higher satisfaction. Therefore, the research findings support hypothesis H19 (Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceived price and repurchase intention).

In a study of service quality in Indian fast food restaurants conducted by Gagandeep (2011) it is found that responsiveness is the weakest attribute in service quality. Low responsiveness shown by the employees leads to low satisfaction towards the service. Customers perceive employees as to not give careful and personalized attention to them. Therefore, the research findings do not support hypothesis H13 (customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between responsiveness and repurchase intention). Moreover, the research finding does not support hypothesis H18 (customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between perceived value and repurchase intention). According to Wang (2010), perceived value has a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. Higher product quality leads to higher customer satisfaction and stronger repurchase intention. However, in this study, customer satisfaction does not mediate between perceived value and repurchase intention. From the findings, H12 (customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between reliability and repurchase intention) and H15 (customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between empathy and repurchase intention) were not relevant due to the, the removal of dimension during the factor analysis process.

CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to have a better understanding of university student preference towards fast food restaurants by explaining the factors of service quality, relationship quality, perceived price, perceived value, customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. The results showed that assurance, food quality, perceived price and relationship quality were found to be the predictors of customer satisfaction. However, relationship quality was the most dominant factor in explaining customer satisfaction. The study also found that customer satisfaction as the mediator that affects the relationships of relationship quality, perceived price, and perceived value. These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the importance of these factors in affecting customer satisfaction and repurchase intention in the fast food industry.

The results of the study indicate that it is important for fast food restaurant operators to understand the needs and wants to satisfy their customers especially the university students. Focus should be given to relationship quality in order to increase customer satisfaction. Increasing customer satisfaction will lead to repurchase intention thus this will give more profits to fast food restaurants.

This study will also be beneficial to the fast food industry and business practitioners in preparing the customer-contact employees to have the ability to improve service quality in maintaining the relationship with their customers. Hence, fast food companies must understand and know how to attract university students to their restaurant. This is because, in the rapid growth of the various types of fast food restaurants, the company might have difficulties maintaining their customers' loyalty. It is important to deeply understand customer needs and wants to increase profits. The results of this study allow fast food restaurants to develop plans and strategies for improvement.

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