

Attributes Affecting Quick Service Restaurants Revisit Intention among Student of Higher Learning Institutions

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ABSTRACT

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There is a growing demand for quick service restaurants worldwide. Notwithstanding the rapid growth, quick service restaurant is in a competitive industry in which the business survival depends on their ability to attract and retain their customers. Previous studies found that customers from limited buying power market segments, such as teenagers studying at higher learning institutions, often consider their food and dining experience in deciding where and what to eat. This study aims to identify the relationship between attributes of quick service restaurants, higher learning institution students' satisfaction and their revisit intention. A self-administered questionnaire was used and distributed to 240 respondents of two higher learning institutions in Terengganu, Malaysia. Data gathered was analysed using SPSS version 21. Results showed that all six hypotheses of this study are supported. Furthermore, all variables which are food quality, service quality, ambience quality, brand image and convenience have significant relation with students' satisfaction. From the findings, students' satisfaction does mediate the relationship between attributes of quick service restaurants and revisit intention. Attribute of brand image appears to be the most influential factor in students' decision on which quick service restaurants outlets they prefer to go to and dine in. Several managerial implications are discussed as guidelines for quick service restaurant operators.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Demands in the foodservice sector have shown rapid growth worldwide, including in quick-service restaurants (QSRs). Despite the growth in demand for their products and services, QSRs face significant competition in attracting and retaining their customers due to the fast change in the global market (Chow et al., 2013). Therefore, to succeed in the business, it is crucial for QSRs businesses to have a well-planned business modus operandi and continuously monitor and update themselves with the changes in demand (i.e., external forces) among various targets markets. Having and incorporating the most up-to-date business model are also believed to help the QSRs' business management know the factors that influence their customers' satisfaction, which will lead to revisiting intentions. Many studies have investigated the factors affecting customer satisfaction with QSRs. Focusing on Malaysia, a study on the relationship between food menu selection and customer satisfaction at one of the QSRs in Kuala Lumpur found that the new food menu was the most preferable and ordered by local residents (Shamsudin et al., 2020). Other studies on understanding customer behavior within QSRs research scope (i.e., Rana et al., 2017; Farooqui & Alwi, 2019; Shamsudin et al., 2020; Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Slack et al., 2020; Chun & Ochir, 2020; Javed et al., 2021) have revealed several key factors namely food attribute, service quality, and physical surrounding. However, little research has examined the effect of restaurant brand and image on customers' satisfaction and behavioral intention (Abdul Talib, 2009). As described by Kalitesi and İlişkisi (2020), an image is a set of brand associations formed and attached to the mind of customers. It is vital for an organization as it creates a competitive advantage that others cannot easily duplicate.

A positive QSRs business image often serves as a product or service guarantee in the eyes and minds of customers (Abdul Talib, 2009). Moreover, the brand image of a QSR business represents a guide for customers from various market segments, including students studying at higher learning institutions. The QSRs business image enables customers to determine if the restaurant fulfills their needs or expectations. The more closely a product or service offering meets a customer's expectations, the more likely it will persuade them to become regular patrons (Bendall-Lyon & Power, 2004). A favorable customer would probably become a repeat customer, and an unfavorable customer would likely become a non-repeat customer. Repeat customers or consumer loyalty with a clear brand image is crucial for the success of QSRs businesses and will remain stable in today's competitive food and service sector. In the case of QSRs in Malaysia, the demand for buying and enjoying food and drinks from QSRs started in 1963 with the opening of A&W restaurant in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. It was found that most young Malaysian citizens preferred to buy and eat food and drinks from QSRs outlets of established and international chain brands (Bakar et al., 2017). As Bakar et al. (2017) reiterated, many well-established restaurants with famous international brands indicate high-quality trust and products and services. However, it was also reported that young consumers in Malaysia, especially students, had limited spending power and tight financial resources, often discussed as the core factor in their decision-making (Mokhtar et al., 2020). Regardless, it is crucial to have a deeper understanding and examine both financial and non-financial perspectives which influence their decision and satisfaction in choosing and dining at any QSRs. Thus, this study aims to examine the relationships between factors that influence attributes of the QSR, students' satisfaction, and revisit intention among students of higher learning institutions in Malaysia, particularly Terengganu.

2. QUICK-SERVICE RESTAURANTS IN TERENGGANU

Terengganu or popularly known as ‘The Land of Turtles’, is situated in the east coast region of West Malaysia with a scenic coastline overlooking the South China Sea (MTPB, 2008). The increasing QSR business in Malaysia is evident that Malaysia is becoming the new future investment destination for foreign franchising businesses. Most of the franchise businesses operating in Malaysia are quick-service multinational companies. On the west coast of the peninsular, the development of the QSR business has mushroomed in great numbers. However, this contrasts with the states on the east coast, where the numbers are very small, and Terengganu is one of them (Abd Kadir & Harun, 2008).

Table 1. The List of Quick Service Restaurants in Terengganu

QSR Outlets	Location
Mc Donald's	1. Sri Kerteh, Bandar Baru Kerteh, Kemaman
	2. Jalan Baru Pak Sabah, Dungun
	3. Padang Hiliran, Kuala Terengganu
	4. Paya Bunga, Kuala Terengganu
	5. Chukai town, Kemaman
	6. Kijal, Kemaman
	7. Sura Gate, Dungun
Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC)	1. Jalan Sultan Ismail, Kuala Terengganu
	2. Pantai Batu Buruk, Kuala Terengganu
	3. Paya Keladi Business Centre, Kuala Terengganu
	4. Mydin Mall, Kuala Terengganu
	5. Giant Hypermarket, Kuala Terengganu
	6. Sura Gate, Dungun
Pizza Hut	1. Jalan Sultan Ismail, Kuala Terengganu
	2. Giant Hypermarket, Kuala Terengganu
	3. Mesra Mall, Kemaman
Burger King	1. Mesra Mall, Kemaman
A&W	1. Pantai Batu Buruk, Kuala Terengganu

Sources: *Majlis Bandaraya Kuala Terengganu (MBKT)*, *Majlis Perbandaran Kemaman (MPK)* and *Majlis Perbandaran Dungun (MPD)*, Terengganu 2019.

Until now, only a few franchisors have opened their outlets in Terengganu. Among them are Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), McDonald's, and Pizza Hut (see Table 1). In addition, the number of each franchise's outlets is very disappointing. The finding from a study by Abd Kadir and Harun (2008) mentioned that advertising and food taste are the main factors influencing customers visiting and dining at QSRs outlets in Terengganu. The income (i.e., spending and buying power) of young customers or those still studying does not appear to be the core factor for the demand. According to Abd Kadir and Harun (2008), location is the main barrier among customers in patronizing QSRs. For example, there are only a few QSRs outlets in Kuala Terengganu to meet the demand of the whole population. Based on the research, it was found that QSRs are only available in the city center. The researchers also suggested that QSRs increase their number of outlets in the residential area.

3. THEORETICAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Factors Affecting Customer Satisfaction

Previous studies conducted by several scholars have determined the factors affecting customer satisfaction (Andreani et al., 2012; Chow et al., 2013; Ergin & Akbay, 2010). Nevertheless, there is no agreement on what and which factors would greatly influence customer satisfaction. This might be because each research was carried out with the involvement of different samples at different locations and scopes. As for this study, five factors: 1) food quality, 2) service quality, 3) ambiance quality, 4) brand image, and 5) convenience have been identified as core factors that affect students' satisfaction and their revisit intention to QSRs.

3.1.1 Food Quality

One of the most important factors in influencing customer satisfaction is food quality. This was proven in a study by Mannan et al. (2019), which stated that food quality is valued as one of the most critical determinants of a customer's decision to return to the selected restaurant. Some had suggested that customers would return to a restaurant due to the quality of food and fresh ingredients. Food quality refers to several features, including food presentation, taste, menu diversity, healthiness, and freshness (Hanaysha, 2016). Likewise, Shamsudin et al. (2020) defined food quality as the overall quality characteristics accepted by the consumers. The characteristics mentioned include the internal and external factors such as details of the ingredients and the packaging of the food served. Today's younger generation, especially students studying at higher learning institutions, are more particular in terms of health and safety. They are now more concerned about what they consume and demand high-quality products. Shamsudin et al. (2020) mentioned that the current generation would prefer to consume only good quality food at quick-service restaurants. This contrasts with the previous generations that avoided consuming fast food as they believed it was not healthy. Due to the competition in the fast-food industry and high demand by the customers regarding health and safety issues, service providers and manufacturers are forced to follow the requirements of correct labeling on ingredients, nutrition, and other details. It is crucial to have a deeper understanding on students' responses towards food quality in QSRs outlets.

H_{1a}: QSRs food quality has a significant influence on students' satisfaction

3.1.2 Service Quality

Customers' decisions and purchasing behaviors are interrelated with their appraisal of the overall experience of a service or product (Zhong & Moon, 2020). The study also mentioned that service quality is crucial to a company's success because it affects customer satisfaction and loyalty. Gong and Yi (2018) stated that high levels of service quality might lead to high customer satisfaction. This was supported in a study by Shin et al. (2015), which mentioned that dissatisfaction would occur if the service performance was unmatched by customers' expectations. Various views and perspectives can define service quality. The earliest study on service quality by Parasuraman et al. (1988) defined service quality as a function of the differences between expectation and performance along the quality dimensions. On the other hand, Ryu and Jang (2008) agreed that service is given by the staff in the service set to the customers. Thus, service quality is one of the vital elements of customer satisfaction, and it will significantly affect organizational success, especially in the service industry such as QSRs.

H_{1b}: QSRs service quality has a significant influence on students' satisfaction

3.1.3 Ambiance Quality

Nowadays, the time has become one of the limitations in preparing food, especially among students, as they need to spend most of their time attending classes and doing their coursework. This leads them to eat out at their convenience more often than ever. For them, going to a restaurant does not only mean dining; but also hanging out with friends, having discussions, and doing their assignments. Hongsrirumuang (2020) mentioned that the atmosphere within a restaurant could satisfy a person's expectations or needs, such as physiological needs, social needs, self-esteem needs, safety needs and so on. A study done by Ryu et al. (2010) revealed that customers rated more on time-saving and a better eating environment than on earlier days. Atmospheric factors include lights, ambiance, style, cleanliness, comfortable seats, aesthetic elements, music, and noise are important to customers when dining (Javed et al. (2021) as cited in Liu et al. (2014); Pei and Ayub (2015). These are believed to contribute to behavioral intention or repeat patronage. Many studies suggest that an innovative and more pleasant atmosphere is necessary for a firm's success. Farooqui and Alwi (2019) believed that the atmosphere of a restaurant could be as crucial as the food itself. Improvement of food quality alone will not necessarily satisfy their customers since customers today prefer to enjoy a comfortable dining space rather than the food itself (Horng et al., 2013). The demand from customers for a better dining environment has inspired QSRs marketers to keep on upgrading the restaurant environment to increase consumers' satisfaction. This will then lead to consumers' willingness to revisit the restaurant again (Xu, 2007).

H_{1c}: QSRs ambiance quality has a significant influence on students' satisfaction

3.1.4 Brand Image

One of the strategies to make customers satisfied and become loyal to a product is by building a positive brand image. The brand name refers to a word, a letter, or a group of words or letters (Cannon et al., 2008), whereas the brand image is defined as the perception of a brand through brand association in the mind of customers (Sandoh et al., 2007). According to Andreani et al. (2012), customers familiar with or regularly using certain brands would likely have brand image consistency. It is the way of identifying and differentiating one product from another used by many established industries and companies as a tool in marketing to sustain the business (Idris, 2012). Grewal and Levy (2010) discussed that brand associations reflect the mental links customers have built between a brand and its key product traits, such as a logo, slogan, or famous personality. The important components in the favourability of a brand would be the ability to keep the brand in customers' minds and the fit between the brand impressions in the customers' minds with the desired corporate image of the brand. A study conducted by Sandoh et al. (2007) concerning the overall satisfaction and loyalty intention of cosmetic products revealed that customer loyalty is influenced by a positive brand image, making customers repurchase more in the future. This is supported by a study on quick-service restaurants done by Andreani et al. (2012), which found that the success of McDonald's is also driven by its strategy to maintain its brand image. In his study, Knutson (2000) discovered how college students perceived restaurant brands. It was revealed that branding has an emotional appeal to the customers and tells how consumers want to feel about themselves. Furthermore, customers will also stay loyal to a brand if it fulfills their psychological needs.

H_{1d}: QSRs brand image has a significant influence on students' satisfaction