

# The Study of Customer Perception and Expectation toward Food Presentation

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## ABSTRACT

*Every sole ingredient used in plating foods may influence foods presentation. Other elements in food presentation such the foods' color, temperature, variety, freshness, shape and the materials of the tableware used; need to be balance on plate to increase the level of palatability. These elements in a food's plate may act as the communication and marketing tool to the customers. The study was done through a survey participated by 300 students of University Technology Mara (Penang). The purpose of this study is to examine the elements that manipulate customers' expectation on food presentation and to investigate the degree of customer perception toward food presentation. In this study, the researcher found that the food presentation has significantly impacted on the way in which customers consume their foods, the different color, shape, size and variety of food, the used of tableware and arrangements of foods must work together pleasantly in order to stimulate customer appetite. It may beneficial to all the food developers as the art may significantly changes by manipulating the factors and resulting in influencing the customers' foods' choices.*

**Keywords:** *Gastronomy, Food Presentation, Customer's Perception, Food Plating*

## INTRODUCTION

People eat with eyes; for that reason the food must be presented with the balance of the colors, textures and flavor (Hobday & Denbury, 2010). Customers attracted to the foods simply by looking at foods that being presented and it became as an essential part of the multisensory eating experience (Deroy et al, 2014). It supported by Burger et al. (2011), as he stated that food presentation is truly known as an art form; start from the arrangement of the food and garnishes to the dishes. According to Burton (2014), effective plating can be achieved when the plating is able to make the foods looks appetizing to the diners. Deroy et al. (2014) suggested that the ideas of foods are considerably attractive presented on plate till to the ending response of the dish by the diners. He emphasizes clearly that person who is plating, serve the food as a vital element of the multisensory eating experiences.

Visual cues provide the utmost contribution in the flavor of food, drink (Fizman et al., 2011) and flavor perception (Shenkar et al, 2011). Visual arrangement of food provides ample information such its potential for palatability and availability, both of which can impact eating behavior. Besides, the existence of visual, colours and shape give impact on food presentation. External factors including cutlery or tableware, the atmosphere and packaging; to the food source can also affect the customers' perception of food (Stewart & Goss, 2010). Moreover, a perfect ambiance such the arrangement of table settings may reflect on how the foods are being offered. Then, candles, flowers and napkins may allow diners to enjoy the food presentation perfectly. Lastly, lighting and mirrors enhance the mood of the dining experience and allows the guest to enjoy their meals.

Wadhera and Capaldi (2014) propose six important key points regarding of having visual cues in food presentation. First, it becomes the effective methods to introduce different food to children. Second, improving the visual appeal of meal may boost higher amount of consumption among diners. Third, food arrangements on plate impact diners' expectations. Forth, the visual exposure might enhance the desire to eat and any other regulatory peptides required for digestion process. Fifth, affect the energy intake through the variations of portions size and lastly, portion size serves act as the benchmarking in determine the appropriate amount of food to consume. The reputable hotels, resorts and cafes believe presentation of foods might influences customers' likeness equivalent with the taste of the food. Diners are keen to pay more merely for it aesthetical value of food (Michael et al., 2014).

Specifically, the finding from this study has to provide additional knowledge into the existing body of knowledge on the topic of food presentation. The purposes of this study are:

1. To examine the elements that manipulates customers' expectation on food presentation.
2. To investigate the degree of customer perception toward food presentation.

The issues of food presentation are being debated by previous researchers for several aspects (Deroy et al., 2014; Burton, 2014; Michael et al., 2014; Salleh, et al., 2015; Zellner et al, 2011) but a few issues for "The elements that manipulates customer expectation and the degree of customer perception towards food presentation" being highlight by previous researchers. So, this study focus to answer the two main objectives stated above.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Salleh Mohd Radzi, et al. (2015) refers food presentation as presenting and decorating the food attractively as a tangible cues for the customers' perception of quality. Aforesaid, ppresentations are essential to indicate the first expectations of the food to the customer. In the food perspective, the presentation is the adaptation of sauces and garnishes to menu items; soup, entrées, main courses and desserts. Moreover, the perfect combination of food presentation along with the perfect ambiance of the surrounding allows the diners to enjoy the dining experiences to the fullest. Therefore, the visual quality of food presence eventually affects the diners' expectations on the qualities of taste and smell and also their hedonic value (Zellner et al., 2011). Spence (2010) also agreed that it is been discovered that customers' perception is usually dominated by what they see on their eye in regard to having better dining experience.

Previous research shown by presenting a good food presentation can affect the customer's perception during dining (Delwiche, 2012). Piqueras et al., (2013), added that the customers' perception towards foods can be increase by enhancing the colour of the surroundings in which food is being presented; for example, instead of the lighting of the ambient, it may include the selection of tablecloth, plateware and table setting. Spence et al., (2012) stated that those plateware are specifically affect from its colour, shape and size. The colour of plate act as same catalyst to enhance the greatness of eating experiences (Wadhwa & Philips, 2014). Instead of colour, plates also being presented in differences shapes used to match the foods (Spence et al., 2014). Contrast differences between food shape and plate are mostly a common feature of Japanese cuisine (Spence et al., 2014). Spence et al., (2013), argued that plateware effectively assembly the eating experience and gave impact on the perceived quality of the food. Last but not least, the texture of plateware is also crucial to affect the dining experience.

Zellner et al. (2010) shown that a relationship on the shape and colour of food presentation may affect customers' expectation. Indeed the effectiveness of colour affects the expectation of diners' palatability and ultimately response to the food choice and consumption (Spence et al., 2010; Wadhwa & Philips, 2014). Food shape may affect the apparent volume of the food that being presented (Philips, 2014) and affect the perception of customers' experience (Spence et al., 2012). Moreover, Wadhwa and Philips (2014) indicated that the volume of food intake effect by the presence of food variety especially regarding its appearance, texture, taste and flavour. Bucher et al., (2011) argued that having variety in flavours and foods within a meal may give a raise in the food consumption. For example, participants that being given a varied sandwich with fillings, yogurt flavour or pasta shape would consume more. In addition, Spence et al., (2014) recommended that in order to make customer have a pleasurable eating experience, importantly the food need to have variants garnishing in its visual presentation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sampling**

This study focuses on the dimensions of food presentation aspect along with the effects on customers' perceptions. Surveys and several secondary data collections applied in this study in order to examine those dimensions. Applying quantitative research allows this study to test the accuracy of theory that being proposed, building facts shows comparison and relationship among variables predict the respondents' behavior and also allow the researcher to explain the outcome statistically. The used of quantitative study also allow to see the sights of research based on statistics by using methods such as structured interviews and questionnaires. A questionnaire divided into three sections; section A: the demographic profiles of the respondents, section B: questionnaire on attitude perspectives and section C: questionnaire on the customer's perception toward certain situation of food presentation. The questionnaire was used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = No at all to 5 = Yes.

The sample of this study consisted of undergraduate students in a range of diploma and degree. Undergraduate students were selected as the sample because they represent as a customer for any food outlets. In fact, as a student they can't cook, had limited time and resources to cook at the hostel so they need to eat outside to fulfill their hunger. The selection of sample was based on convenience method. This approach is selected to ensure that the research would be based upon actual experience of both parties. In other words, this approach to tap respondents experience and revealed about issues. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to students from various faculties in the universities. However, only 300 were returned, out of 200 were deemed to be completed and usable.

The data was collected through a specially designed self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaires were distributed to the students through their class representatives. They were given 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire in a classroom environment, after the lectures or after class session. This method was used in order to induce a greater number of respondents to complete the questionnaires and hence to achieve a higher response rate. Eight weekends were expected to be spent for data collection (Julai-August 2017). Therefore, secondary data has been collected for the purpose of a particular research paper, including information from journals and internet based reports. Previous research paper and internet based reports on food presentation being examined and used to gain more input for this study.

## FINDINGS

This section would summarize the result obtained from the questionnaires that have been distributed randomly among Universiti Teknologi Mara (Penang)'s students. The results would be segmented into three sections; the demographic profiles of the respondents, result on attitude perspectives and also result on the customer's perception toward certain situation of food presentation. Roscoe (1975) proposes that sample sizes larger than 30 and less than 500 are the most appropriate for research. A total 300 respondents would be sufficient in this study to give more reliable and significant results. Questionnaires are being distributed to randomly 300 students within the Universiti Teknologi Mara (UITM) Penang.

### Respondents' profile

**Table 1.1: The number and percentage (%) of overall respondents reported by the demographical characteristics (gender, age, faculty, level of education and the number of eating out per week).**

<i><b>VARIABLES</b></i>	<i><b>n</b></i>	<i><b>%</b></i>
<i><b>Gender</b></i>		
<i>Male</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Female</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>60</i>
<i><b>Age</b></i>		
<i>25 years and below</i>	<i>280</i>	<i>93.33</i>
<i>26-35 years</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>6.67</i>
<i><b>Faculty</b></i>		
<i>FPHP</i>	<i>160</i>	<i>53.33</i>
<i>Business</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>26.67</i>
<i>Engineering</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>20</i>
<i><b>Level of education</b></i>		
<i>Diploma</i>	<i>280</i>	<i>93.33</i>
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>6.66</i>
<i><b>Eating out per week</b></i>		
<i>One</i>	<i>140</i>	<i>46.67</i>
<i>Two</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>16.67</i>
<i>Three</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>3.33</i>
<i>Four or more</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>33.33</i>

Table 1.1: The number and percentage (%) of overall respondents demographical characteristics.

## Analysis and discussion

To see whether colour can enhance the customers liking towards food. Respondents were given a questionnaire about whether their appetite may increase simply by any combination colour on cakes and from the collected data, it can be gathered that 53.3 per cent of the respondents answered 'no'. The result was contrast with Olsen et al., (2012), this researcher mention that when colour is added to foods, it can eventually stimulate the appetite. Somehow rather, 96.7 per cent of the respondents (n=290; 120 males and 170 females) responded a meal with a variety of colour may enhanced the attractiveness of food. Perhaps it because the reasons of varieties food taken for meal itself instead of a piece of cakes with colourful decoration.

Further, the respondents were asked whether they would eat cheese cake that served on white plate or black plate. 46.7 percent choose white plate and the rest choose black plate. 140 out of 300 respondents believed the ability of colour on tableware can influence the food flavour. This result shows that colour of plate not really stimulated customer's appetite. But then again results from research done by Harrar and Spence (2013) demonstrated that colour of plate affects the taste of the food sampled.

Result of the survey for perception toward the shape of food in food presentation showed that 50 per cent participants agree shaped of food increased their interest to eat. Similarly, researcher found that customer want their vegetables to be cut and instead of having sticks and slices which are the most common in serving styles (Olsen et al., 2012). The respondents' for this research also being asked on their perception between circular pizza and square pizza, which one they look bigger. The results showed 66.7 per cent of the respondents believes that circular pizza is bigger that square pizza. Indeed, according to Wadhwa and Philips (2014), the shape of the food pieces can affect the food quantity estimations. Eating rice with more than one dish should be necessity in our society, but surprising when 56.7 percent of respondents (n= 40 for males and n=130 females) not argue with this statement. 70 percent respondent (60 males and 150 females responded) said that their "prefer to eat food that arise with pleasant presentation". To prove the effect of food variety on customer's perception the respondents were asked either they preferred eating nasi lemak with only one condiment or not. Mostly the respondents were rejecting the statement. In the same interpretation, Delwiche, (2012) agrees on the idea by stating the number of foods offered at a meal rise the more number of food consumption.

In order to determining the attitude of customers towards colour of plateware on food presentation, the respondents were asked whether they would eat cheese cake that served on white plate or black plate. Most of the respondents white plate and the remaining 46.7 percent choose black plate. Equally, supportive to Piqueras et al., (2012), the colour of the plate may exerted customers' perception of flavour intensity and sweetness. Moreover, base on the results of food sample; pink mousse that placed on white plate was scored higher than the food sample that placed on black plate. An analysed about the perception of tableware may affect the flavour of a dish, 140 out of 300 respondents may believe so and the remaining respondents did not believe the ability of colour on tableware can influence the food flavour. However, research done by Harrar & Spence (2013) revealed that colour of tableware might affects the taste of the food sampled.

To identify the respondents' preferences regarding the shape of plateware, they were given a question asking whether they prefer square or round plate to dine with. From the results, it can be identified that 76.7 per cent of the respondents which consists of 100 males and 130 females may prefer round plate instead of square plate. This result parallel to Stewart and Goss (2013) studied, round plate may increase the enhancement value and ultimately leads to an increase in perceived to eat. From this result, any food establishment; restaurants or hotels might want to apply it in their daily business operation. Moreover, respondents also being asked about their attitude and perception towards size of plateware whether they have tendency to eat more if they dine using smaller fork. 63.3 per cent of the respondents said that they don't mind and not affected by the size of fork while eating. Conversely, Olsen et al., (2012) discovered that diners were consumed more from smaller fork compared to larger forks. The rationale for this result was due to the smaller fork appears to provide less satisfaction level; the diners had a feeling of they did not consuming their foods enough in order to satisfied their hunger. Then a question tried to look whether the size of plateware is an important element during dining experience. The result showed that 73.3 percent agreed (80 males and 140 females) and the continuing 26.7 percent were disagree. Harrar and Spence (2013) noted that from the size of the plateware and the cutlery used by people to eat may ultimately change the consumption behaviours among the diners.

## **CONCLUSION**

Presentation of food focuses more with how the food is being prepared and presented to the customers. Remarkably presenting a good-looking and well-decorated food can excite customer perception of quality. Ideally, the presentation of the food is a key food attribute in modeling dining satisfaction (Kivela et al., 1999; Shaharudin et al., 2011). Presentation starts from the food layout at the counter, the style of service from the staff, the ambience in the outlet, the cutleries and plateware used, variety of dish in a plate and portion size of food itself. In order to preserve the presentation always at the best, the food producer should maintain the efficiency of the equipment. According to Namkung et al. (2007), food presentation is a factor that constitutes food quality and impacts the appetite of the customer and their perception of food quality. Presentation is associated with how the food is being prepared and presented to the customers.

Food presentation is the process that the diners have offered the selected food in a fashion that is visually appealing. The food presentation has significantly impacted on the way in which customers consume their foods. In addition, the different colour, components, texture, shape and arrangements of foods must work together pleasantly and appropriately in order to form pleasing combination on plate (Zampollo et al., 2011). Indeed, the way the diners' interest is cultivated in high-end restaurants through highly complex food preparations and presentations, amongst other factors, is probably a key aspect of designing pleasurable food experiences. Indeed, this study is beneficial in assisting food vendor on how to attract customers and having a precise style of food presentation.

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