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FOREWORD BY DEPUTY RECTOR OF RESEARCH, INDUSTRIAL LINKAGES & ALUMNI

Since 2018, the INSIGHT JOURNAL (IJ) from Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor has come up with several biennial publications. Volume 1 and 2 debuted in 2018, followed by Volume 3 this year as well as Volume 4 with 19 published papers due to the great response from authors both in and out of UiTM. Through Insight Journal, lecturers have the ability to publish their research articles and opportunity to share their academic findings. Insight Journal is indexed in MyJurnal MCC and is now an international refereed journal with many international reviewers from prestigious universities appointed as its editorial review board

members.

This volume 5 as well as volume 6 (which will be published in 2020) are special issues for the 6th International Accounting and Business Conference (IABC) 2019 held at Indonesia Banking School, Jakarta. The conference was jointly organized by the Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor and the Indonesia Banking School Jakarta. Hence, the volumes focus mainly on the accounting and business research papers compiled from this conference, which was considered a huge success as over 66 full papers were presented.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Rector of UiTM Johor, Associate Professor Dr. Ahmad Naqiyuddin Bakar for his distinctive support, IJ Managing Editor for this issue Dr. Noriah Ismail, IJ Assistant Managing Editor, Fazdillah Md Kassim well as all the reviewers and editors who have contributed in the publication of this special issue.

Thank you.

ASSOCIATE PROF. DR. SAUNAH ZAINON

Deputy Rector of Research, Industrial Linkages & Alumni Editor-in-Chief for INSIGHT Journal Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor



Determinants of Customer Satisfaction on Catering Service in Electric Train Service (ETS), Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB)

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Abstract

In Malaysia, Electrified Train Services (ETS) is the first high speed intercity train system. ETS was executed under the Eighth and Ninth Malaysia Plan with the intention to enhance the operational efficiency and service of Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad (KTMB). This service provides an improved travel time for a long-haul journey. As a competitor to other means of public transportation such as airline, this ETS service must be constantly innovative to stay relevant. To maintain and improve this service, the underlying forces that affect customer satisfaction including catering service, needs to be understood. The purpose of this study is to identify the determinants of customer satisfaction on the catering service in ETS of KTMB and among the most common factor discussed are food quality, service quality and atmosphere. 180 questionnaires were distributed to passengers who buy meals at the ETS cabin café and a total of 104 questionnaires were returned. Descriptive analysis was first conducted to examine the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Multiple linear regression analysis was then performed to determine the relationship among variables. The findings of this study clearly show that there were positive relationships between food quality and atmosphere with customers' satisfaction in a surprising manner, no significant relationship between service quality and customers' satisfaction discovered. Among the two significant factors, the food quality has the



strongest influence on customers' satisfaction. Therefore, it is necessary for the ETS catering to continuously understand customers' need especially with regards to food quality. Improving customers' satisfaction will lead to the development of customer relationship, revenue increase and stronger competitive advantage.

Keywords: Catering, Transportation / Railway Catering, Passenger Satisfaction, KTM (ETS).

1. Introduction

The maximization of financial returns is the goal of each profit-oriented organization and as a matter of fact, it is the common benchmark by which business measure success. However, most successful businesses have become acquainted with the idea that money is only the by-product of their actual purpose of existence, which is to create value for their stakeholders and will only follow if this purpose is fulfilled. In addition to that, if the value they provided exceeded the expectation of their stakeholders, they in return could envisage a brighter financial performance ahead since their stakeholders is expected to be satisfied and will return and patronize their product and service offerings.

KTMB strives to provide better service for its customers and in August 2010, it commenced its ETS to provide Malaysian and travelers with different means of inter-city traveling options. This service is better from KTMB's existing traditional train service since it provides improved travel time for a long-haul journey. As a competitor to the other means of public transportation like airline, this ETS service must innovate to stay relevant and in January 2018, KTMB has signed a catering service agreement with Brahim's SATS Food Services Sdn. Bhd., where the latter will render its catering services onboard all ETS operated by KTMB; effective from May 2017. This venture is known as Keretapi Tanah Melayu Catering Service (KTMC).

This new product offering by KTMB is giving its passengers more value and as to maintain and improve this service, the underlying force that affects customers' satisfaction on catering services need to be understood. Food quality, service quality and atmosphere are among the most common factors that contributed to customers' satisfaction. If the business misjudged or failed to recognize these dimensions, satisfaction of their customers is not guaranteed and may threaten the success of its products or services offerings. Liniere (2013) stated that customers' satisfaction is important to a business but achieving satisfaction is complex because it consists of various components, such as expectations or trusts that make a person satisfied. The problem of customers' satisfaction has occurred in other inter-city public transportation service like in the aviation industry (Gebremariam, 2016; Rhoades et. al, 1998; Randall Brandt & Reffett, 1989) and this could be an important point of reference to KTMB to avoid such occurrence from happening to its ETS Cabin Cafe service.

The design and implementation of a strategic based on customers' satisfaction cannot be successful unless the owners determine how customers perceived its products and services. Thus, it is important to understand the factors affecting customers' satisfaction.



Since catering services in ETS is still new, therefore it is a virtually non-existent study. This study is conducted in the hope that some questions pertaining customers' satisfaction pertaining products and services offered by ETS are answered.

2. Customer Satisfaction and its Influencing Factors

Customer satisfaction has the largest effect on customer engagement (Hapsari et al, 2017; Kim & Shan 2015) and relates directly to the customer perception and purchase intention (Edogi, 2017). It is a key element for any service-oriented business (Kabir, 2016). The physical elements of the service and the service convenience are important in determining the overall customer satisfaction (Shahijan et al., 2018; Gebremariam, 2016; Pantouvakis & Lymperopoulos, 2008) and according to Archana & Subha (2012), service quality can be determined as overall consumer's impression of the relative efficiency on the service and the organization. Crews' friendliness, language skill and grooming, as well as personal touch in term of individual attention, kindliness, courtesy, and punctuality are part of the service quality mentioned (Namukasa, 2013; Nathanai, 2008; Babbar & Koufteros, 2008).

Besides that, there are several other affecting factors like food quality (Hanaysha, 2016; Al-Tit, 2015; Jooyeon & Soo, 2010; Ryu & Han, 2010) and atmosphere (Hanaysha, 2016; Ahmadpour, 2016; Ali et al, 2015; Mohi, 2012; Jooyeon & Cheong, 2010). Some components like varieties of menu items, proper freshness, taste quality, reasonable temperature, perceived price and appealing presentation are greatly influence the judgement of the customers when evaluating food quality and a consultation with professional chefs is a normality when designing a proper menu (O'Hara & Strugnell, 1997). While the physical surroundings such as the décor, layout, seat comfort and cleanliness that are accompanied with pleasant sound, where the dine-in takes place, will reflects the quality and create favourable emotions for the customer (Keshavarz et al, 2016; Ahmadpour, 2016; Mohi, 2012; Ryu and Han, 2010).

3. Materials and methods

3.1 Sampling and Instrument

The population of this study was the ETS passengers that patron the ETS Cabin Café service. However, there is no database which recorded this population; neither in the past nor in the present time, making it unlikely to obtain an ideal sampling frame for this study. Besides that, the exact number of the population is also indeterminable as it is not precise every time and it is even harder to detect how many passengers have even eaten in the café. As reveal in the schedule of KTMB's traffic statistics, the number of ETS passengers has always increases from the year 2010 to 2016. In this case, it always depends on which errors a researcher wants to consider affecting the results. Thus, the purposive sampling was adopted to be used in this study. According to Rowley (2014), purposive sampling is used when researchers know something about the specific cases and deliberately selects specific ones because they are likely to produce the most valuable data. Thus, the weekend ETS passengers who travel in a long-haul return trip of Kuala Lumpur and Padang Besar and patron the ETS Cabin Café were purposively sampled and a selfreported experience through a questionnaire survey was chosen as the means of data collection. This return trip had been chosen as suggested by the Operation Executive of KTMC, since the trip has the highest number of passengers (320 in total) and



approximately 30-35% of them will use the ETS Cabin Café service. The questionnaire was designed based on all the core constructs stipulated in the study framework and was presented in dual languages (Malay and English). The questionnaires consisted of two parts. Part A was created using a nominal scale to obtain the demographic information of the respondents. For part B, it consists of four (4) sections. Section (A) was used to identify the level of food quality provided by ETS cabin café while section B and C were developed to identify the effect of service quality and atmosphere respectively. Next, section D was designed to determine the overall passenger satisfaction on the catering service provided by ETS.

3.2 Data Collection

The KTMB Corporate Planning Manager and SBU Intercity/ETS Marketing Manager were first contacted with official letter in acquiring permission to undertake the survey in the ETS. A draft survey instrument was also given. Subsequently, after getting the approval from the respective managers, a total of 180 questionnaires were administered and of these 180 questionnaires, 104 responses were obtained. The reliability test was then undertaken for Part B which included Section A, B, C and D, separately. The result showed that the instrument and items used was reliable with coefficient alpha value at 0.903 for Section A, 0.952 for Section B, 0.920 for Section C and 0.913 for Section D.

4. Analyses and Results

4.1 Respondent Profiles

Frequency test revealed most of the respondents were female with 52.90% (n=55) compared to male, 47.10% (n=49). The largest respondents were from two age groups, age 25-34 years and 45 and above, which shared the same amount of percentage and frequency, 25.00% (n=26). Followed by the age group of 35-44 years, 20.20% (n=21), 18-24 years, 17.30% (n=18) and below 18 years, 12.50% (n=13). Most of the respondents were from the income range group of students, no income and retired persons which was 26.90% (n=36). Then followed by below RM3860, 26.90% (n=28), RM3860-RM8319, 25.00% (n=26) and RM8319 and above which was 13.50% (n=14). The respondents who have taken the ETS three times a year or more was 47.10% (n=49) while taken the ETS once or twice per month was 39.40% (n=42). Finally, the respondents taken ETS more than twice per month was 12.50% (n=13).

4.2 Relationship between Factors (Food Quality, Service Quality, Atmosphere) and Customer Satisfaction

Multiple regression was employed to help determine which of the three independent variables (factors) could be used to predict the passenger satisfaction on catering service provided by ETS. The model was significant $[F(3,100)=113,\,p<.001]$ with the predictors explaining 77% of the variation in the customer satisfaction on catering service in ETS. Among the three predictors, which are Food Quality, Service Quality and Atmosphere, entered into the model, two made statistically contributions to customer satisfaction and that predictors were the Food Quality and Atmosphere with sig. value at .000 and .001 each, when p<.01. In terms of importance, Food Quality made the largest unique contribution to the model with $\beta=.573$.



Table 1 Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis

	В	SE B	β
Constant	013	1.064	
Food Quality	.436	.056	.573*
Service Quality	.044	.069	.056
Atmosphere	.312	.093	.313*

Note: $R^2 = .772$, *p < .01

Based on the Coefficient table, one variable that is service quality was found to be not significant to be included in the model (0.526> 0.05). Therefore, removing this variable could be considered in order to improve the model.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

It is apparent from this study that food quality plays a big role in ensuring customer satisfaction in ETS. This is supported by Ahmad (2015) who concluded that the most significant factors that contribute to a higher level of customer satisfaction is food quality. Key attributes like taste, presentation, temperature, portion size, menu option, price, and value were deemed to be important by the customer for them to patronize any catering services. The customers incline to measure food quality based on these elements (Hanaysha, 2016) and price exclusively was stressed by Ryu & Han (2010) as the major element to be looked at.

Another important insight from this study is that atmosphere did affect the customers' satisfaction and this finding is similar to Hanaysha (2016) who indicated that physical environment has a significant effect on customers' satisfaction. This means that customers who are probably build up a higher degree of satisfaction may have favorable perceptions of the physical environment. Antecedently, Jooyeon & Soo (2010) supported this notion after their study found that atmospheric elements of interior design and layout can highly influence customer contentment. Moreover, as asserted by Ryu and Han (2010), customer satisfaction level increases when the physical environment reflects quality.

Surprisingly, another profound discovery in this ETS Cabin Café study is that service quality has no significant influence on the customers' satisfaction. This unpredicted finding does not support the empirical findings of Shahijan et. al. (2018) and many other past literatures. This is likely to be due to the fact that customers may already have a certain kind of expectation regarding the standard level of service provided by this kind of catering or the service quality is commonly encountered and has no special distinction that it makes the service to be too common.

To conclude, the finding of this study will help to understand better the ongoing discussion of the customers' satisfaction in the mobile catering services and provide a foundation for future researchers and generating the future direction of other similar perspective studies.

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