

FACTORS INFLUENCING CUSTOMER SERVICE IN FAST FOOD RESTUARANTS IN TAMIL NADU

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Abstract— The purpose of this research project is to identify the factors influencing the customer service experience quality at fast food restaurants in Tamil Nadu, India. The paper also attempts to determine the service quality gap between the customer expectation and their experience in fast food restaurants. Service industry requires customer involvement in their service while delivering so that customer satisfaction is very important which creates revisit intention in them. Every fast food restaurant differs in its customer service, value proposition, etc. Among the many fast food restaurants in Tamil Nadu, Pizza Hut and Dominos were selected for this work. Primary data were collected through questionnaire floated to the customers of the Pizza Hut and Domino's within the age group of 18 to 26. Study results indicate four factors which influence the customer service experience: Dining environment, Food quality, Service, Price. Through the survey, the service quality gaps between customer expectation and the experience was determined.

Keywords- customer service; service quality; service gap; dining environment; food quality; service; price

I. INTRODUCTION

Fast food restaurant is one of the fast-growing industries in India. Fast food industry in India is growing and is expected to double in size between 2013 and 2016 to \$1.12 billion, according to Economist Intelligence Unit. Youth's lifestyle prefers fast food restaurants for their convenience, time saving and relaxing dining experience. Lifestyle of the people is changing in day-to-day life which results in increasing number of people to choose fast food restaurants. Major challenges faced in fast food restaurant are issues of danger that exists in food due to additives, improper food preparation, and poor food choices. Food presentation stimulates the customer perception of quality and the mood of consuming food. Service quality retains customers and attains survival and growth for the restaurants. Environment issues which decide the customer waiting time for the customers can be reduced. Usually Tamil Nadu people used to prefer their own cuisine rather than fast food. Most of the people used to cook in their home and don't choose to dine at restaurant. But nowadays there are certain changes in consumer trends which increase the popularity of eating outside, and therefore fast food restaurant is growing rapidly. Initially fast food restaurants faced assertive challenges in getting accepted by Tamil Nadu consumers

due to cultural mismatch. Thus, there was a market research made by marketers to understand their culture. Today fast food industry is being fitted to Tamil Nadu food concern and is welcomed by public as well as getting famous by the country. Fast food chains are achieving acclaim among the youngsters. Services are always tacit. A firm can satisfy the customer by meeting the specific expectations of the product they have by virtue of interaction with the firm. Models of customer satisfaction varies across firms depending on the product they offer. Some components focus on quality being the only factor of satisfaction. All the components or the attributes should focus on the quality, core service or the value. The customers experience these states as an emotion of delight. The author is off the view that, in order for service providers to increase the customer delight, the firm needs experience based expectations rather than the normal expectations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Food quality

Food quality is one of the important aspects in fast food restaurants but there is no unity on the individual attributes that constitute food quality. So, that all the food characteristics are chunk together in only one variable that is food quality [19]. Food characteristics depend upon the food type and the individual's food preference because the characteristic quality of food which creates changes will change with respect time and consumer's mind [11]. Food quality is one of the important components and it's been constantly shown as a core value that a customer will consider in deciding a fast food restaurant. There is much groundwork done on food quality characteristics like freshness of food, food presentation, food taste, variety of food, food temperature and innovation of food. Food quality is considered as key foundation for the customer satisfaction and loyalty. Youth customers who mostly prefer eating delicious food consider good quality of food and beverages to satisfy them. Analysts stated that quality of menu items will affect customer's plan to dine at the restaurant [19].

B. Service quality

Service quality is the demanding success factor of fast food restaurant. Service quality is the main component in

a fast food restaurant which is to be measured and improved continuously. "SERVQUAL" is a tool for identifying service quality measurement [12]. This model is universally accepted instrument for the service operators to pinpoint and also improve the service quality in order to attain high level of customer satisfaction. Service quality will undoubtedly affect the emotional satisfaction that in turn that would have specific effect on both customer loyalty and relationship quality [15]. Researchers provided additional support between service quality, customer satisfaction, loyalty and also stated the difference between emotional loyalty and behavioral loyalty [16]. A customer's outcome and experience is enhanced when quality service is being delivered to them. This makes the customers fall emotionally to the other side of satisfaction, 'the dissatisfaction factor', which is making customers to fall into 2 categories namely, annoyance and victimized, from which, it takes reasonable time for customers to recover out of it.

C. Dining Environment

People today prefer to eat out more often. Customer expectation of quality levels towards fast food restaurant with respect to dining experience in the recent years has gone up [13]. Likewise, another study reveals that more and more try to put a premium on time saving as well as better eating environment if compared to prior days [14]. These factors inspire restaurant to put effort in design and provide a more relaxation environment for customers.

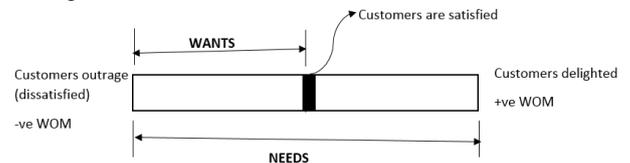
D. Price

Pricing or the perceived value of the restaurants is another element that has been considered with respect to the customer service quality experience in relation to customer satisfaction. Monetary and time costs variously affect perceived value while perceived service quality points to higher levels of perceived value. Moreover, post-purchase intentions were more energetically determined by perceived value [18]. The price or value for determining customer satisfaction for fast food restaurant is investigated by researchers but it didn't find to be make sense [17]. This is nonetheless believed to be due to the humor of fast food restaurants in which price is comparably low and consequently not of central importance to consumers compared to other types of installation such as fine-dining restaurants [18]. Nonetheless, to the youth who are not cost-effectively strong may find that price is important to draw them to the restaurant.

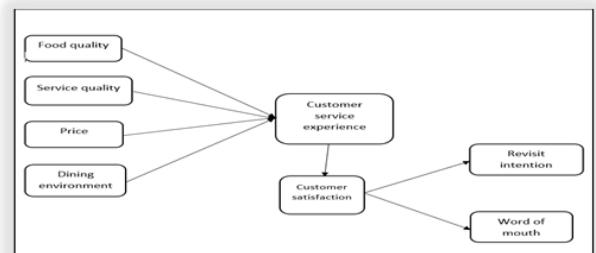
III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Customer satisfaction model is taken to understand the customer needs and wants in the fast food restaurants. Two parameters customers delight and customer outreach are taken and their needs and wants are framed according to it. The main difference between need and want is something you have to have and something you would like to have. The basic needs of a customer in the fast food restaurants are quality of food, greeting service, price, hygienic, customer loyalty, dining environment. Among these needs there are certain factors which the customer like to have like food quality, service quality,

etc. which tends to be their wants, if their wants are fulfilled the customers are satisfied and if wants equals needs then the customers are delighted which is one step ahead of satisfaction. This customer delight will create a positive word-of-mouth among the customers and there is a high chance of getting a large number of customers to the fast food restaurants. Even when the wants are not fulfilled then customer outreach happens that is customers are dissatisfied which creates a negative word-of-mouth among the customers.



From the literature review, it is clear that food quality, service quality, dining environment, price influences the customer service quality in the fast food restaurants.



These four factors influence the customer service experience and if the service quality creates a positive impact in the customer's mind, the customers will be satisfied. This satisfaction in the customer will create a revisit intention in their mind. The best service quality of the restaurant will across the other customers through word-of-mouth.

IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- To identify the major factors influencing customer service quality I fast food restaurants in Tamil Nadu
- To assess service quality gap between the customer expectation and the customer perception of the service

V. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used for this research work is quantitative research. Research instrument used here is questionnaire, pilot test, in-depth interviews. Data collection is done through primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected from the questionnaire and the secondary data is collected from pilot test, in-depth interviews conducted with customers and owners of Pizza Hut and Domino's. Sampling design for this research work is targeting population between 18 to 26 years that is mostly youngsters. The sample size targeted around 200 respondents. The sample was taken from students and IT professionals who prefer fast food to regular gourmet food. SERVQUAL scale is used to measure the service quality experienced by the customers. In this research, questionnaire is divided into three sections: Section A (General Information), Section B (Expectation of the restaurant service), Section C (Experience of the

restaurant service). SERVQUAL consists of five dimensions namely responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide service), assurance (Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence), tangibles (appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication), empathy (caring, individualized attention the firms provides its customers), reliability (ability to perform promised service dependably and accurately).

VI. ANALYSIS

SERVQUAL is quality tool which is used to measure the service quality for any service organization. It is used to determine the service quality gaps in the service. Generally, this tool is used to find the gap between the perceived service and the expected service of the customer. Service quality or gap model consists of five different gaps namely,

- Knowledge Gap: Gap between the customer expectation and the management perception i.e. customer's desires or wants are wrongly recognize the service offered by the management.
- Policy Gap: Gap between the translation of service policies from the management to the employees which results in improper communication and poor service to the customers.
- Delivery Gap: Gap between the service quality specification and the service delivery from the employee to the customers which represents the weakness in the employee performance.
- Customer Gap: Gap between the customer expectation and the customer perception. This gap occurs due to inadequate market research.
- Communication Gap: Gap between the promised service quality of management not delivered or not match with customer expectation.

TABLE 1 shows the overall service quality gap of each parameter, TABLE 2 shows the service quality gap of each parameter based on the different age category, TABLE 3 shows the service quality gap of each parameter based on the gender. A set of 23 questions were separated under the five SERVQUAL dimensions comparing the expectation and the experience of the customer. The reliability of the questionnaire is tested using SPSS software (Cronbach's alpha).

TABLE I OVERALL GAP

Parameters	Gap
Assurance	0.06062177
Responsiveness	0.026208503
Empathy	0.3144210833
Tangibility	0.039882062
Reliability	0.16962719

TABLE II GAP BASED ON VARIOUR AGE CATEGORY

Parameters	Gap	18-21	22-24	24-26	Above 26	Variance
Reliability	0.169	0.02	0.06	0.35	0.54	0.0470
Tangibility	0.039	0.07	0.03	0.11	0.27	0.0132
Empathy	0.314	0.19	0.26	0.43	0.70	0.1047
Responsiveness	0.026	0	0.03	0.13	0.17	0.0082
Assurance	0.06	0.42	0.04	0.23	0.12	0.0333

TABLE III GAP BASED ON GENDER

Parameters	Gap	Male	Female	Variance
Reliability	0.169	0.175	0.125	0.007
Tangibility	0.039	0.040	0.233	0.024
Empathy	0.314	0.302	0.311	0.003
Responsiveness	0.026	0.068	0.216	0.023
Assurance	0.060	0.057	0.066	0.002

Cronbach's alpha is used to determine the internal consistency that is strictly related to set of items as a group. By the reliability statistics of Cronbach's alpha, it is displayed that the questionnaire is 96.5% reliable which scales up every variable and will give the clear result.

VII. DISCUSSION

In this research, it describes the service quality gap between the customer expectation and the customer experience. The response was collected from the people around the age group of 18-26 years which comprises of only youngsters. The respondents were around Tamil Nadu who used to prefer mostly Dominos and Pizza Hut. The questionnaire subsists of many components of service in a fast food restaurant. It determines the quality of food (food is hot and fresh, variety in menu, quantity of food, food taste and presentation, price satisfying the cost and competitive), quality of service (availability of server, knowledge of server about the food and the beverages, clarity in bill, reliability in payment mechanism like credit card, wallet), basic needs like providing tissues in the washing area and dining table, dustbins placed to throw the waste, ambience (like clean environment inside the restaurant, washing area, tables, pleasant odour throughout the restaurant), location of the restaurant, adequate parking space, surroundings of the restaurant with some extra benefits like play field for children, TV's in the restaurant to watch cricket match, etc., service reliability like providing the food with promised time and exact food.

The questionnaire consists of the respondent's basic information adding to that frequency of their visit to the fast food restaurant, mostly preferred fast food restaurants in the city like Pizza hut, Dominos, McDonalds, Subway, KFC and others like street fast foods. The survey consists of 66.3% of male respondents and 33.7% of female respondents. The respondents' level of education comprises of 44.5% of Under-Graduate students, 26.7% of Under-graduate students, 16.83% of working class people, 11.8% of diploma students. Factors influencing the customer service quality experience gives 57.4% respondents tells as food quality, 15.8% of respondents tells as service and price, 6.9% tells as dining environment, 4.9% tells as convenience. The age group category consists of 6.8% of respondents are 18-21, 59.8% of respondents are 22-24, 23.5% of respondents are 25-36, 9.8% of respondents are above 26. This shows that respondents are mostly post graduate people and employers. The frequency of respondents to fast food restaurants consists of 28.4% are once in a month, 30.3% are once in a week, 14.7% are twice a week, 18.6% are twice a week, 8% are others like rarely, occasionally, etc. The TABLE 4 shows the factors with the maximum gap and these are the blockage points in the service quality gap for the fast food restaurant. These were the areas

which has to be full-bodied at early which is the outcome from the survey. The respondents were mostly male and post-graduates, employees whose response majority telling food quality is the main factor service quality in fast food restaurants.

TABLE IV FACTORS WITH MAXIMUM GAP

Factors	Gap
Food served in hot and fresh manner	0.57105
Exactly provided the food what you have ordered	0.56319
Provided food in exact time	0.31624
Prices are competitive	0.30809
Price satisfying the quality	0.26684
Pleasant odour in the restaurant	0.18928
Restaurant makes you comfortable	0.15928
Hand wash and dining area kept clean	0.14176
Restaurant kept clean	0.10910
Availability of server for customers	0.0701

VIII. CONCLUSION

Quality is one of the main components for service or product offered to the consumers. It illustrates the characteristics of a good service that speaks directly to the voice of the customer. This research work constitutes the burden for the customers while pursuing the service in the fast food restaurants. There are some errors occurs due to the miscommunication between the management and the employees which also leads to the miscommunication between employees and the customers which results in poor service quality. Service sector involves customers directly in providing the service, so that the restaurant should make the proper planning in designing the service blueprint which is offered to the customers. There are certain limitations in this research work, they are only 102 responses were received, can't able to cover the whole fast food restaurant all over the Tamil Nadu, can't able to do in-depth interviews to more people, focused only on Pizza Hut, Dominos fast food restaurants, can't able to screen the other factors influencing the customer service out of which is discussed in this research. There are certain needs and wants differ with respect to each fast food restaurants and home delivery is preferred more than going to a restaurant which is not discussed in this research work.

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