

## A Study on Determinants of Customer Satisfaction towards Service Providers Attentiveness in Casual Dining Restaurants

Noorazlin Ramli<sup>1</sup>, Wan Fatimah Wan Mohd Nowalid<sup>2</sup>, Malina Hanum Mohd Kamal<sup>1</sup>,  
Wan Nazriah Wan Nawawi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Hotel and Tourism Management,  
Universiti Teknologi MARA, Dungun, Terengganu, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>Tourism and Hospitality Department,  
Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah, Sg. Air Tawar, Selangor, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

This study was designed to examine to what extent does a service provider attentiveness is importance towards customer satisfaction. Through personally administered questionnaires, a significant of data was gathered. This research study was carried out in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. Concerning the area of the research, five numbers of casual dining have been chosen in order to collect relevant information. Thus, 44 customers from each restaurant were expected to be surveyed and this would come to a total of 220 respondents thus would give reliable and meaningful results. A series of analyses looking at frequencies and mean scores statistics was undertaken. Results revealed that customers of each restaurant are satisfied with the overall quality of service delivery, service provider attitude, personal hygiene and restaurant environment. Despite these, the most outstanding result obtained is related to service delivery. In addition, the results revealed that if the service provider attentiveness increased this strongly influenced a customer satisfaction and their attention to repeat patronization. This scenario highlights several important points that should be acted on by most of the casual dining restaurants operators to understand customer needs better.

**KEYWORDS:** Service Provider Attentiveness, Customer Satisfaction, Casual Dining Restaurants, Service Delivery, Repeat Patronization.

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### INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the restaurant industry is undergoing a dramatic transformation and experiencing heightened competition. Casual dining restaurant is an important but often neglected area of study [1]. The fact is that a restaurant business is regarded as a small credence service, and the quality of the services and food are difficult to prove until customers patronize the restaurant. It is worth to highlight that the quality of the service and food that customers encounter may be different each time they re-visit a particular casual dining restaurant, thus influencing the level of satisfaction. Again, as supported by [2], food and service were the important determinants that affect customers to patronize the restaurants. Similarly, in [3] noted that food and service cannot be separated in the restaurant business. These determinants cannot be successfully delivered to the customer without the efficiency of the restaurant service staff [4]. In other words, the attentiveness of the restaurant service provider or employees is vital to the success of the restaurant businesses.

Attentiveness is referring to a particular attention given by the employee towards customers [5]. However, in [6] defines attentiveness as showing the worth of a person by giving full concentration to his or her words. Attentiveness describes the intensity that the service providers apply to each of the five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing). In addition, attentiveness also relates to the quality of thought used to think about the information received through these senses for instance listening to a customer's request and hearing their complaint [7]. Having introduced the background of this study, the attentiveness of the restaurants staff will be discussed in the next section.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

From the literature that has been reviewed so far, customer satisfaction seems to be the subject of considerable interest to many researchers. Some anecdotal evidence noted that, the success of the business relies so much on customer's satisfaction. Besides, in [4] mentioned that, the significant impact on the degree of customer pleasure and satisfaction in a foodservice sector depends on employee performance on presenting their service upon point of contact. Additionally, having said by [8] when a customer chooses a provider that provides service quality that meets or exceeds his or her expectations, he or she is more likely to choose the same provider

again. This scenario also happens to the hotel industry [9] as the customers' loyalty will ensure the profitability of the business. In [10] said that, customers' turnover attained from satisfaction of the service presentation. As a result, it will increase the level of loyalty and the possibility of repeat purchase behavior. Hence, it has been recognized that there is a positive relationship between customer turnover, satisfaction and loyalty [11]. It has been discovered that foodservice provider spend too little effort on giving an excellent quality of service for customers. Service quality offered by global competitors has developed into a major issue of frustration for today's customers in a foodservice industry and other industries [12]. Thus, poor customer service will lead to lower profitability in doing business by as much as 20% compared to those competitors delivering first-rate service quality, due to service failure [13]. Thus, this research will determine to what extent the service delivery, service provider's attitude, personnel hygiene and physical environment could influence customers' satisfaction in casual dining restaurant. Although a few numbers of studies have been conducted on the customer satisfaction, there is no research on the primary element of attentiveness that will affect the most towards the satisfaction of customers in a casual dining restaurant. An in-depth understanding of those factors, it may help manager or employee to be more particular in giving a good customer service towards customers.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

A series of the questionnaire survey is developed to determine to what extent does employee attentiveness is important towards customer satisfaction in a casual dining restaurant. It comprises of four determinants of attentiveness: overall quality of service delivery, service provider attitude, personal hygiene and restaurant environment. It is worth highlighting that, primary data used in this study were collected from 220 survey respondents who dined out at the restaurants. From the result, it was found that one of the elements of service provider attentiveness will be most affected towards customer satisfaction. In order to achieve the stated objective, basic descriptive statistic and multiple regression analysis were employed.

The mean ratings of service delivery, personnel hygiene, service provider attitude and restaurant environment attributes are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean scores for service delivery, personnel hygiene, service provider attitude and restaurant environment

Item No	Items	N	Mean (M)	S.D
1	Service Delivery	220	59.968	12.352
2	Personnel Hygiene	220	11.518	2.223
3	Service Provider Attitude	220	44.550	9.102
4	Restaurant Environment	220	19.631	2.627

From Table 1, it is worth to highlight that, majority of the respondents were satisfied with the service delivery. In respond to the above result, from the elements mentioned above, service delivery provided higher rating of the mean scores (M = 59.968, S.D = 12.352). Thus, it was reported that, from those stated elements, service delivery is the main factor that will be most affected on customer satisfaction in the restaurants. Therefore, this result answered the objective in this research study.

In addition, in this study, correlation coefficients were used to analyse the hypotheses, H1 (the higher employee attentiveness, the higher customer satisfaction) with the sub hypotheses, H1 (a), H1 (b), H1(c) and H1 (d). This analysis was used to examine the relationship between employee attentiveness towards customer satisfaction in the casual dining restaurants. The sub hypotheses include:

Hypotheses 1(a): There is a positive relationship between service delivery and customer satisfaction.

Hypotheses 1(b): The higher employee's personal hygiene, the higher customer satisfaction.

Hypotheses 1(c): There is a positive relationship between employee attitude and customer satisfaction.

Hypotheses 1(d): There is a positive relationship between restaurant environment and customer satisfaction.

A Pearson correlation analysis with one-tailed test of significance was undertaken for each of the four elements (service delivery, service provider attitude, personnel hygiene and restaurant environment) in service provider attentiveness as an independent variable. Correlations were made with the customer satisfaction (dependent variable).

From the correlations table, it shows that there were relationships between all the elements towards customer satisfaction. If the value of the correlation is greater than  $\pm 0.30$ , it is considered to meet a minimal level,  $\pm 0.50$  or greater are considered to be very significant [14]. Thus, for this study, it was indicated that all the elements have a greater significant except the element of restaurant environment that only has a minimal level of  $\pm 0.30$ . The Pearson correlation for all elements of service providers' attentiveness is displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: The Pearson Correlation

Item No	Items	Pearson Correlation
1	Service Delivery	0.907
2	Personnel Hygiene	0.603
3	Service Provider Attitude	0.808
4	Restaurant Environment	0.371

Next, the coefficient Table 3 was used to determine the main element that can be used to show customer satisfaction.

Table 3: Coefficient for elements of attentiveness

Item No	Items	Beta	Sig (P-Value)
1	Service Delivery	1.187	0.000***
2	Personnel Hygiene	-0.010	0.806
3	Service Provider Attitude	-0.320	0.000***
4	Restaurant Environment	0.066	0.041**

\*\* Significant at 5%

\*\*\* Significant at 1%

From Table 3, it shows the overall significance of the regression model. It can be seen that only service delivery, service provider attitude and restaurant environment were seem significant element of service provider attentiveness (predictor) towards customer satisfaction. The significance value (p-value) of the service delivery and service provider attitude are equal to 0.000 which is less than 0.005. Thus, it was proof that the model is highly significant and can be used to explain the both elements affected on customer satisfaction in the restaurants.

Based on Table 3, one element of the predictor (service provider attentiveness) which is personal hygiene is not significant to be included in the model because the p-value is more than 0.05. Therefore, it could be to consider removing this element in order to improve the model.

In addition, the coefficients table was used to determine the effect of service provider attentiveness towards customer satisfaction. The coefficients for service provider attentiveness are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Overall coefficients for elements of attentiveness

Model	Beta	Sig (p-value)
Service Provider Attentiveness	0.872	0.000***

\*\*\* Significant at 1%

Based on the result, it is worth to mention that when the service provider attentiveness increased, the satisfaction level of customers was also increased. Since significance value (p-value) of the service provider attentiveness is equal to 0.000 which is less than 0.005, the model is highly significant. It can be used to explain that both predictor and outcome is related to each other. If one of the variables increases, the other one will increase.

## CONCLUSION

From a theoretical standpoint, this study makes significant contributions to the hospitality literature beyond previous studies. Although this research has some levels of similarities with some previous studies, it is important to understand how this research is unique from previous research [7, 8]. The most apparent findings of this study are related to the restaurant environment. It consists of enabling the customers to enjoy their meals, appealing facilities own by the restaurants and its features of allowing customers to move around smoothly. This research shows majority of the customers seem to be happy with these attributes. From the service aspect, the customers place more importance on courtesy, followed by efficiency and friendliness of the staff. It also appears that the service staffs of the restaurants had performed quite a good job by not pressuring the customers to acquire the product offered. Furthermore, other issues apparent to this research are particularly on the uncertainty of evaluations by the customers towards the performance of the service providers' attentiveness.

A noticeable finding of the current study is that, started from the quality of the service delivery to the restaurants' environment, customers were seen unable to produce their exact expectations on the issues required. This findings showed the moderate and inconsistency of performance that played by the service operators. All in all, it is hoped that the result of this research will facilitate the management of casual dining restaurants to improve their attentiveness better and understand customers need. The employee attentiveness is significant to achieve an outstanding service delivery quality. In return, it undoubtedly benefits the service operators both in reputation and profitability. In addition, it also will help the operators to become more competitive within the challenging business operations. Although this study does contribute toward a better understanding of the combined effect of total service in a casual dining restaurant towards customer satisfaction, this study is also not without its limitations. Firstly, the findings only represent customers' population within five numbers of restaurants in Klang Valley. It is questionable for the researcher to know whether the results could be the same for other casual dining restaurants

especially the premises that operate outside of research's location scope with different market orientations. The second boundary is possibly related to the validity of the respondents' answers and reactions. This might be happened due to the research that has been done with a small sample size derived from only five research sites. Due to time constraints, the researcher was forced to narrow down the scope of the research. This research was only attempted to focus on the service provider attentiveness through the assessment of customers' satisfaction. It had caused very slim findings, as well as constricted perspectives on the issues discussed.

In conclusion, it will be good if the research can be expanded the scope of the study. As generally understood, applying this research to broader type of food service operations and larger group of customers might produce different insights and findings on the aspect of customers' satisfaction and service providers' attentiveness. Moreover, this research could be expanded to more profit orientations to explore the application of service providers' attentiveness within the aspect of monetary cost factors. At this point, cost analysis for customers' satisfaction straightly through their intention to return would provide a monetary value for the foodservice operators. Finally, it would be great to relate the present research study with other factors that might influence customers' satisfaction towards foodservice operators. The future research would be expanded more by exploring their relation to each other whether there is a possibility for all the factors to be applied together simultaneously.

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