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# **Empirical Study of Factors Affecting Brand Loyalty: Evidence from Fast Food Restaurants in Pakistan**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The intent of this research is to inspect the factors affecting brand loyalty towards fast food industry in Pakistan. For the sake of this research the selected fast food restaurant was KFC. Data was gathered from two hundred respondents through self administered survey. The study used descriptive statistics and Structured Equation Modeling for data analysis and hypothesis testing. The findings of the study revealed the significant impact of food quality, service quality and price on customer satisfaction significant. Meanwhile, study found the positive impact on customer trust by service quality; while the impact of food quality, location and atmosphere on the trust of customer was less significant than service quality. The study depicted that the brand loyalty was directly influenced by "customer satisfaction". As study identified a positive influence on customer satisfaction & loyalty towards brands by "food quality" so, maintaining the quality of food should be a prime focus for fast food restaurants.

**KEYWORDS:** Brand loyalty, food quality, customer satisfaction

Article Type: Research article

#### 1.INTRODUCTION

In today's world restaurants are becoming more important because they provide the services to the people away from home in the form of foods. Pattern of food consumption varies from culture to culture, society to society, and country to country. There are several reasons behind change of eating habits of Pakistan inhabitants. Due to globalization, economic shift, income growth, busy lifestyle, gas shortage etc. people have been lead towards fast food consumption in Pakistan[1]. There is a hottest trend of fast food because Pakistani youth are more likely to eat fast food than other meal. When customer's expectations are being met then they are satisfied and go for re-purchase from same brand. But dissatisfied customer do not give a surety to go back and make a purchase again. Brand loyalty plays a vital role in order to understand the consumer purchase behavior. Intense competition is found in the fast food industry, the key to sustainable competitive advantage lies in to keep the customer satisfied because satisfied customer makes a consistent purchase of the same brand over the time, even when alternatives are available or it is assumed to be a significant determinant of repeat sales, positive word-of-mouth, and loyalty.

Brand loyalty is considered to be an important factor in the success of any organization because it gives the edge to the firms in the marketplace. The question raised here is; is brand loyalty affected by some factors? Yes, factors like food quality, price, service quality, environment and atmosphere effects customer satisfaction and customer trust that ultimately affects the brand loyalty[2]. How food quality and price effect the brand loyalty? Customer prime concern is quality and when the restaurants are quality- oriented it increases the customer satisfaction and increase the trust on brand that ultimately increases the brand loyalty. Loyalty is affected when customer perceived price is too high or too low. How do the services affect the brand loyalty? It matters a lot for customers that how they are being served. Customer who perceived that he/sheis being treated nicely, effects his/her satisfaction and ultimately the brand loyalty.

The present study contains 9 sections. The 1<sup>st</sup> section is Introduction that described the history or background of the research and an overview about all sections contained in the paper. Section 2 is about literature review; in which evolution of concept loyalty and role of satisfaction in retention is viewed as well as previous studies have been described about the factors that have influence on loyalty across different sectors in different contexts. In Section 3 the research model and hypothesis have been developed on the basis of literature review. Section 4 described the research problem and the objectives that study achieved. This section also described the motive behind conducting the research. Section 5 described the methodological design that has been used in the study, target

population, sampling technique, instrument and also data analysis tools. Section 6 discussed the findings of Structure Equation Modeling and hypothesis testing. In sections 7, 8 and 9 conclusion was drawn on the basis of obtained SEM results, practical implications and the limitations of the present study have been discussed.

#### 2.LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of brand loyalty has changed over the years [3, 4]. Earlier it was just a repeat purchase behavior [5,6] but later on it was found that loyalty has multi-dimensional concept [7] and the evolution was passed on different phases. [8] defined the loyalty as customer's deep commitment to buy their favorite product and services on consistent basis. Only re-purchase behavior is not a good enough indicator which indicates that customers are loyal. [9] reported that it does not always happen that dissatisfied customers switch brands. The reason behind is that they do not have enough information about the alternatives and think that alternatives are not good enough than current brand [10].

Due to intense competition, it is a primary goal of firms to retain their customers [11] and loyal customers can be viewed as the key to success and the survival of any business [12] and the means to gain competitive edge. In service industry, the cost of retaining the existing customers is at least 5-9 times less than the cost of attracting new ones. The 5% increase in customer loyalty leads to 25-85% increase in profitability [13]. Service industry should concentrate on customer's retention and hold them as a competitive asset [8]. Marketers should have knowledge about the factors that influence the decision of consumers to return towards another meal. By understanding these factors, it is possible to meet the customers' expectations and keep them satisfied.

[14] found in his study that the factors i-eproduct quality, trust and satisfaction have significant impact on customer loyaltytowards Malaysian fast food restaurant.

Another study[2] conducted in Tehran on Boof Chain restaurant with the aim of investigating the factors affecting customer loyalty in the restaurant industry with a mediating variable. He considered food quality, service quality, environment and price and location as independent variable, the customer satisfaction and customer trust as mediating variable and brand loyalty as dependent variable. Structural equation modeling technique has been used in this study. Results indicated that factors like food quality, service quality, restaurant environment and price have major influence on satisfaction of customers but the impact of location was not significant. While, there is a positive impact of food quality, price and service quality on customer trust. Meanwhile, study also found the considerable impact of satisfaction of customers on loyalty towards brand; while, study identified less significant impact on loyalty by customer trust.

In addition [15] conducted a study in Pakistan on fast food restaurant with this aim to examine the influence of factors on brand loyalty. This research focused on the factors (brand name, product quality, brand knowledge, brand social responsibility, WOM) and were taken as independent variable, while the brand trust was taken as mediating variable. Structural equation modeling technique was used in this research. The study found, except word of mouth, all factors have significant impact on brand trust. Meanwhile, study also found that brand trust was partially correlated with brand loyalty.

[16] conducted a study in India to examine the impact of price on brand loyalty a case of detergent. In order to test the hypothesis study has used Friedman non parametric test. Hence, study reported that brand loyalty is highly sensitive to price fluctuation, customer do not re-buy the product when price is perceived to be too high or low, a single unit change in price affects his decision or choice of product.

Whereas,[17] conducted a study in Hong Kong with the objective of examining the loyalty factors and also the sportswear loyalty behavior. The research used independent sample t-test and discriminant analysis. Results of the study showed that hard-core loyal gave more importance to product quality, brand name and style, and they are not price sensitive. If the product is giving more value in terms of attributes then such type of customers are willing to pay a premium price. [18] had conducted a study on how sportswear brand loyalty is influenced by the factors of brand loyalty in Malaysia. He considered the factors such as brand name, price, style, promotion, product quality, service quality, store environment as independent variables and loyalty as dependent variable. This research had used one-way ANOVA, Pearson correlation as well as descriptive analysis. The study found a positive association between loyalty factors i-e price, perceived quality, service quality, environment, promotion with brand loyalty. All factors had a positive relationship with brand loyalty except style.

[19] conducted a study with the purpose of determining the factors that influencing the brand loyalty of swim wear in Kenya. Pearson correlation was used for hypothesis testing. The study highlighted that the price, variety, attractiveness, size and brand reputation have positive relationship with brand loyalty.

[20] found in his study done in Malaysia for the sake of determining the influence of factors on brand loyalty. The study strived to examine the factors (product involvement, percieved quality and brand trust) effecting brand

loyalty of young Malaysian consumers towards branded sports shoes. The study found the factors such asproduct involvement and perceived quality have a significant impact on customer loyalty towards branded shoes. Meanwhile, the study found that other factor means brand trust was not a major contributor of brand loyalty.

[21] conducted a study in order to examine the relationship of factors(product quality, price, promotion, satisfaction and repeat purchase) with consumers brand loyalty in soft drinks industry. The study used correlations and multiple regressions to test relationship among the variables. The researcher found that promotion has got a great importance for Kenyian consumers, while, on the other hand, the product quality is influential for Indian consumers.

Human behavior is greatly influenced by internal as well as by external factors. The positive information towards brand received by the family members play a vital role in the formation of brand associations, perceived quality and ultimately affects the brand loyalty and brand equity. Information got through family has greater impact than marketing stimuli [22]. Furthermore, perceived quality is related to the intrinsic & extrinsic features of the commodity and has a great influence on purchase intentions of consumers [23]. Moreover, [24] found in his study that company values, company brand personality and consumer functional benefits is key and consistent forecasters of both attitudinal and behavioral loyalty.

[25] carried out a study in Malaysia in order to examine the factors affecting the brand loyalty among the laptop users with a purpose of identifying the relationship among the variables price, features, brand name, brand equity, satisfaction and advertising and also on brand loyalty. This study has been used regression and correlation test. The results of this study indicated that all factors have a positive association among them. Moreover, this study also showed that satisfaction has greatest impact on brand loyalty than other factors.

No distinctive study has been found in Pakistan on determining the factors influencing the brand loyalty towards fast food restaurants. This study has looked into the factors those greatly influence the brand loyalty towards fast food restaurants in Pakistan.

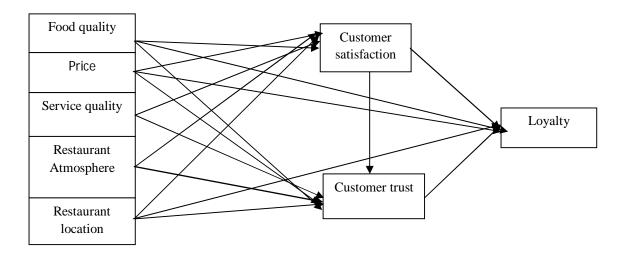
## 3. Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

#### 3.1. Research Model

On the basis of above literature, food quality, price, service quality, restaurant atmosphere, restaurant location, customer satisfaction, customer trust and loyalty are considered in theoretical framework. Figure 3.1 shows that the food quality, price, service quality, restaurant location and restaurant atmosphere have been taken as independent variables, the customer satisfaction and customer trust as mediating variables and loyalty as a dependent variable. The study strived to find out the impact of predictor variables on customer satisfaction and on customer trust and then checked the impact of the mediators on loyalty (dependent variable). The present study also tried to find out the direct impact of some of predictor variables (food quality, price and restaurant location) on loyalty. The impact of one mediator (customer satisfaction) on another mediator (customer trust) can also be tested in the study.

Figure 3.1

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE MEDIATING VARIABLE DEPENDENT VARIABLE



## 3.2. Hypotheses

On the bases of above literature, following hypotheses have been developed.

- **H1**:Food Quality has a positive influence on satisfaction of customers in fast food industry of Pakistan.
- \* H2: Food quality has a positive influence on customer trust in fast food industry of Pakistan.
- \* H3:Quality of food has a positive impact on loyalty towards brands in fast food industry of Pakistan.
- **\Delta H4**: Price has a positive influence on satisfaction of customers toward fast food industry of Pakistan.
- ❖ H5: Price has a positive influence on trust of customers towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- **\Delta H6**: Price has a significant influence on brand loyalty towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- ## H7: Restaurant location has a positive influence on customer satisfaction towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- ❖ H8: Restaurant's location has a positive influence on trust of customers towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- \* **H9**:Restaurant location has a positive influence on brand loyalty towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- # H10:Restaurant atmosphere has a positive influence on satisfaction of customers towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- #11: Restaurant atmosphere has a positive influence on trust of customers towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- **\* H12**: There is a positive influence of service quality on satisfaction of customers towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- # H13: There is a positive influence of quality of service on trust of customers towards fast food industry of Pakistan
- # H14: There is a positive influence of customer trust on loyalty towards brand in fast food industry of Pakistan.
- # H15: There is a positive influence of customer satisfaction on customer trust towards fast food industry of Pakistan.
- **H16**: There is a positive influence of customer satisfaction on loyalty towards brand in fast food industry of Pakistan.

## **4.Research Problem and Objectives**

The need of this study is raised as "brand loyalty is a big challenge for businesses". Today, customers have different alternatives to satisfy their need. To keep them satisfy, retain and grow their customer because a satisfied customer spread a positive word of mouth, it is essential for the companies to shed a light on the factors that are deemed vital for loyalty. Although the present study is done with an aim to determine the factors influencing brand loyalty towards fast food restaurant in Pakistan. Kentucky Fried Chicken, a restaurant, is selected for this purpose. The study also facilitates the understanding of marketers about the factors that have impact on loyalty of fast food restaurant.

The objectives of the present study are:

- To find out the factors those influence the brand loyalty of KFC restaurant in Pakistan.
- To what extent the factors affecting the brand loyalty of KFC restaurant in Pakistan.
- To give some recommendations on the basis of results to develop and maintain a long lasting and profitable relationship with customers.

## 4.1 Motivation

Due to intense competition in the fast food industry, customers have lot of options to move on because the switching cost is very low. They want to get a maximum value from the product and service. As customers are the competitive asset of any business, there is a need to satisfy and retain them that ultimately help the marketers to stay ahead from the rivals and gain more market share. The motive behind conducting this research is to find out the factors that are influential for loyalty.

## 5. Methodological Design

## 5.1. Data Collection and Analysis

The study focused on factors that affect the brand loyalty of fast food restaurant. Customers visiting KFC were targeted for this study. Two hundred valid responses were received through self administered survey on convenient basis by using non probability sampling technique. All items were assessed via 5-point likert scale (ranging from

Strongly Disagree=1 to Strongly Agree=5). Questionnaire was based on theoretical framework and designed in such a way to assess which factors are deemed vital that influences the customer loyalty with KFC, and it contained two sections. The Section 1 contained demographics information while section 2 contained 16 questions related to loyalty constructs. All the items Variables included in the study were further operationalized into items and asked two to three about single variable. Quality of food was assessed by three items like — (tasty food),price was assessed by three item like---(available at reasonable price), service quality was measured by three items ----for example (Is KFC provides you a superior service?). Restaurant location and restaurant atmosphere were assessed by two-two items---- for example (located at convenient place, provides you an attractive and healthy environment and the remaining three questions were about their satisfaction, trust and loyalty with KFC.

## 5.2. Reliability Scale

Table 5.2 is showing the reliability of the scale. Reliability of the items used in the study was tested and all the variables had Cronbach's alpha value greater than .7 which showed that scale was reliable and there were consistency in the responses. Restaurant atmosphere, service quality and customer satisfaction have highest reliability scores .801, .779 and .773 respectively. Customer trust, food quality, brand loyalty, restaurant location and price were the followers with a scores of .765, .759, .740, .737 and .702 respectively.

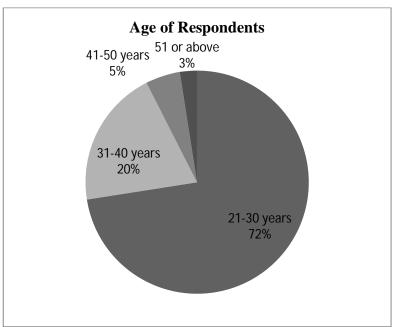
Sr.no	Variables	Cronbach Alpha
1	Food Quality	.759
2	Price	.702
3	Service Quality	.779
4	Restaurant location	.737
5	Restaurant Atmosphere	.801
6	Customer Satisfaction	.773
7	Customer Trust	.765
Q	Brand Lovalty	740

Table 5.2

#### **5.3. Demographic Information**

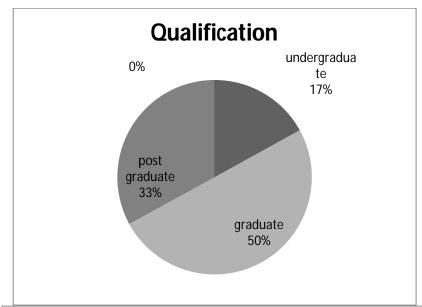
The respondents were not the same in terms of gender. The male respondents have more strength (N=110) than female (N=90) respondents. The age group of 21-30 years had a higher representation (72%) than the other age groups of 31-40 years,41-50 and above 51 in total respondents of 200.

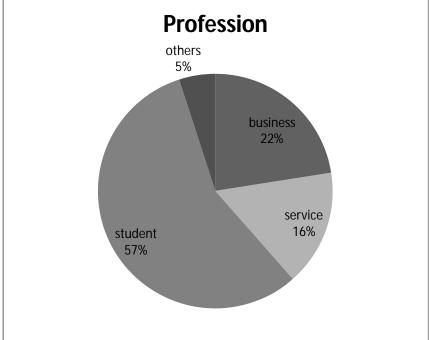
**Figure 5.3.1** 



**Figure 5.3.2** 

The graduate respondents had major proportion (50%) as compared to undergraduate (17%) and post Graduate(33%) from the total strength of participants.





**Figure 5.3.3** 

The majority of the respondents are students with 57%, business with 22%, service at 16% and remaining 5% fall in others category are the followers that took part in the study.

#### 5.4. Fitness Model Statistics

The Structural Equation Modeling was used in the study to measure the relationship between variables and also states coefficients of different variables related to each other. Table 5.4 indicates the attained Goodness of Fit index (GFI) is .994 and the suggested value is >.95. The recommended value of Root Mean Square Residual(RMR) is < .10 but the obtained value is .011. Normed Fit Index (NFI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) holds a value of .989 and .993 against the suggested value >.95. The suggested value of Chi-square divided by its degree of freedom (CMIN/df) is < 3 but the obtained value is 2.457. The recommended value of Adjusted Goodness Fit Index (AGFI) is > .8 but the value that study got is .891. The values of incremental indices showed that model is considered to be fit.

Table 5.4

Fit indices	Suggested value	Attain value		
GFI	>.95	.994		
IFI	>.95	.993		
RMR	< .10	.011		
NFI	>.95	.989		
CFI	>.95	.993		
CMIN/df	<3	2.457		
AGFI	>.8	.891		

## 6. Findings

## 6.1. Summary of Path Analysis

Structure Equation Modeling technique was used in the study for data analysis. The table 6.1 showed a summary of path analysis, in which it indicates the weights of regression (estimates or  $\beta$ ), t value (C.R) and about the significance (p value) of hypothesis. Decision about the hypothesis acceptance or rejection is based on their suggested values.

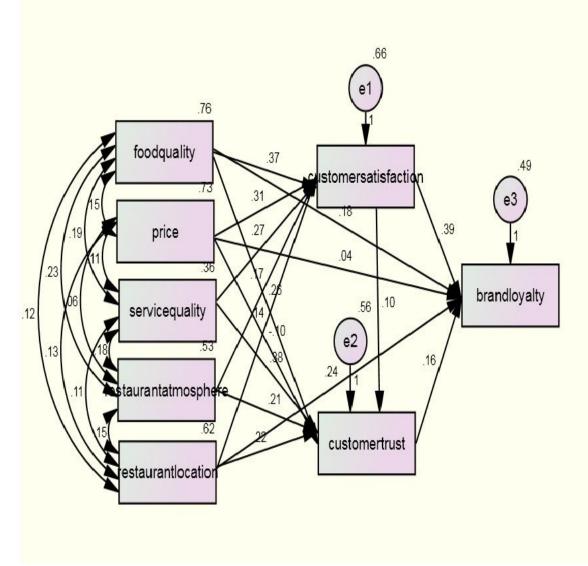
Table 6.1

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
Weights of Regression							•
Customer satisfaction	<	Food quality	.369	.074	4.986	***	accept
Customer satisfaction	<	Service quality	.266	.111	2.396	.017	accept
Customer satisfaction	<	Restaurant atmosphere	.172	.091	1.893	.058	reject
Customer satisfaction	<	Restaurant location	.143	.078	1.835	.067	reject
Customer satisfaction	<	Price	.306	.070	4.358	***	accept
Customer trust	<	Price	096	.068	-1.414	.157	reject
Customer trust	<	Customer satisfaction	.098	.066	1.491	.136	reject
Customer trust	<	Restaurant atmosphere	.214	.085	2.527	.011	accept
Customer trust	<	Restaurant location	.225	.072	3.104	.002	accept
Customer trust	<	Service quality	.383	.104	3.676	***	accept
Customer trust	<	Food quality	.264	.073	3.635	***	accept
Brand loyalty	<	Food quality	.184	.069	2.667	.008	accept
Brand loyalty	<	Price	.043	.063	.680	.496	reject
Brand loyalty	<	Customer satisfaction	.389	.060	6.436	***	accept
Brand loyalty	<	Customer trust	.163	.062	2.619	.009	accept
Brand loyalty	<	Restaurant location	.244	.069	3.545	***	accept

## **6.2.** Hypotheses Testing

The results of KFC path model indicates that food quality has a direct positive impact (H1: estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .369, t<sub>=</sub> 4.986, p<sub><</sub>0.001) on customer satisfaction, so, H1 is accepted. Food quality of KFC has a significant impact on customer trust (H2: estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .264, t= 3.635,p< 0.001), brand loyalty (H3: estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .184,t= 2.667, p<0.05), so, H2 and H3 are accepted. Results indicate that price has a significant impact on customer satisfaction with (H4: estimate (B) = .306, t=4.358.p<0.001), but not on customer trust and on brand lovalty, so, H5 & H6 are rejected. Location has a relative significant impact on customer trust (H8: estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .225,t= 3.104,p<0.002) and on brand loyalty(H9:estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .244,t=3.545, p<0.001), but not support H7 because "t<1.96" and p>0.05". The path analysis of KFC revealed that atmosphere has not a direct impact on customer satisfaction but have on customer trust (H11: estimate (β) = .214, t=2.527, p<0.05), so, H11 is confirmed. Quality of service has a positive impact on satisfaction of customer (H12: estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .266, t=2.396, p<0.05), customer trust (H13: estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .383, t=2.396, p<0.001), so, H12 and H13 are accepted. Customer trust has a significant impact on brand loyalty it provides a support to H14 (estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .163, t= 2.619, p<0.05). Customer satisfaction has not a significant influence on customer trust so, study rejects H15. Meanwhile, it has a positive direct influence on brand loyalty (H16: estimate ( $\beta$ ) = .389, t=6.439, p<0.001); so, H16 is confirmed. The most important factor that has a direct positive impact on loyalty is customer satisfaction with positive standard coefficient .389 indicates that the 100% change in customer satisfaction brings 38.9% change in loyalty and the influence of customer's trust on brand loyalty with positive standard coefficient.163 indicates that the 100% change in customer trusts brings 16.3% change in brand loyalty. Food quality has a direct positive impact on satisfaction with positive standard coefficient .369, revealed that the 100 % change in food quality brings 36.9% change in customer satisfaction. Price has a positive impact on satisfaction with a positive standard coefficient .306 indicates that 100% change in price brings 30.6% change in customer satisfaction. Meanwhile, significant impact of service quality on satisfaction with a positive standard coefficient .266 indicates that 100% change in service quality brings 26.6% change in customer satisfaction.

While, service quality has got a great importance, and has direct influence on customer trust with a positive standard coefficient .383which indicates that the 100 % change in service quality brings 38.3% change in customer trust. Impact of location on customer trust is less significant with a positive standard coefficient .225, while, the impact of food quality on customer trust with a positive standard coefficient .264, which indicates that food quality has a greater impact on customer trust than location.



**Results of Structure Equation Modeling (SEM)** 

#### 7. Conclusion

Brand loyalty is considered the main driver in the success of any organization. It is affected by numerous factors. The study highlighted the factors that have an effect on loyalty towards brand in fast food industry of Pakistan. After testing the research model though Structure Equation Modeling technique the study concluded that all the factors in the suggested model have strong positive, moderate and no impact on loyalty. The satisfaction of customer has a positive influence on loyalty towards brand. Meanwhile, study identified that customer trust has positively influenced by service quality. But impact of price on brand loyalty and customer trust was not found significant. The finding of the present study validates the findings of the previous study that customer satisfaction has strong impact on his or her loyalty towards the brand. Quality of food and service are the main drivers that have great impact on the customer satisfaction. On the basis of findings, study gives some recommendations to KFC

management that could be useful to develop and maintain long lasting relationship with customers as well as sustainable growth in competitive market. Customer's prime concern is good quality of food because they cannot compromise with health. As study identified that food quality has a great impact on customer satisfaction and on loyalty. So KFC needs to maintain the quality of food by using good, ingredients and new taste. All products should be available at competitive price and management needs to revise their processes in order to cut down the cost. As far as service quality is concerned, study identified significant impact on customer trust. Again there is a need to maintain the service quality and try to reduce time between order placement and order fulfillment, provide quick service, and give respect to customers. Furthermore, it is recommended that management should pay attention to give serenity or peaceful environment & also work on to make it more attractive, improve interior as well as outer look, widen their parking area. These will contribute to customer satisfaction and ultimately loyalty.

## 8. Implications

Research is focused on factors affecting brand loyalty towards fast food industry. This study is important for future research and also important for stakeholder's perspectives. There is a gap in this sector of Pakistan because research is not sufficient in this area. This research provides a valuable knowledge to marketers on how to increase the brand loyalty by focusing on price, quality, service quality, image and atmosphere. Restaurants can gain competitive edge in highly competitive market through brand loyalty so, the marketers must have knowledge about factors that influence consumer re-buying decision. By gaining knowledge about these factors, marketers are able to meet the expectation of customers that they have, and enjoy the higher profits.

## 9. Limitations

This study is limited to a single fast food restaurant. Future research can be carried on by considering other restaurants that increase the validity of current research. Data were collected on convenient basis from two cities or from 1 province which reduces the generalizability of the findings. Future research can be done by broadening their base, means data collected from all provinces in order to generalize the findings. The current research is limited to some variables; future research can also add variety of food and availability of food in research model in order to find out the impact of these variables on brand loyalty.

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