

The Impact Of Cafe Employee Service And Other Elements On Consumer Behaviour

Syairah Suib, Sarina Ismail

Abstract: Nowadays, a cafe is labelled as a "third" or "public" place to host regular, volunteer and informal meetings of individuals outside of their home and work because of lifestyle changes. Retailers now choose to highlight their store atmosphere to get ahead in this tough industry. Past studies found that employee service significantly increases positive behaviour in the café environment. As a consequence, retailers are trying to update their café's decoration so that it can be used as a spot for customers to do their work while having their meal. This study attempts to investigate how various factors in the café environment impact consumer behaviour. The patrons of cafes in Selangor were selected using purposive sampling technique as the respondents of this study. 320 questionnaires were collected and the Partial Least Square technique was used to analyze the data collected. The findings show that the two factors related to the café environment, which are café design and café cleanliness significantly influence consumer behaviour. The results also indicated that café employee service has a significant positive influence on consumer behaviour. This study has further explored the implications of these findings.

Index Terms: Café Cleanliness, Café Environment, Café Employee Service, Café Facilities, Consumer Behaviour, Partial Least Square, Questionnaire

1 INTRODUCTION

Away-from-home food consumption is thriving globally. The rising significance of food consumed away-from-home creates new challenges for retailers to satisfy consumers' needs. Cafes are becoming one of the attractions for consumers who want to dine out, [1]. A cafe can be labelled as a "third place," or "public place that hosts regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" [2]. A café is often rated based on its uniqueness or décor, such as with interesting colours, comfortable furnishings, pleasant music and lighting. However, most café's owners forget that café cleanliness, café facilities and their employees' service quality are part of the factors that can determine consumer behaviour. In the meantime, the total meal experience which takes into consideration the quality of employee service contributes to the conceptualization of consumer satisfaction [3]. More specifically, customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is influenced by employee behaviour through the interaction between employee and customer [4]. Medeiros and Salay [5] stated that the attitude and friendliness of employees are strongly linked to consumer satisfaction of food services. Several previous studies emphasized that the quality of service is an important factor determining consumer satisfaction in restaurants and foodservice establishment. Marketing and quality literature has highlighted the significance of service employee interpersonal characteristics in a service quality context. Customer relationship marketing, for example, is based on service interactions. It mostly concerns personalized marketing interactions between the service provider and consumer [6], [7].

Employees' customer service encounter is the best representation of employees' interpersonal in the service context. Service encounters rely on interaction, consumer orientation, service customization, employees' ability to adapt and their emotions, among others [8]. Therefore, a great emphasis is placed on the dedication of front line employees to service interactions in order to enhance the establishments as a whole performance and quality. Different scholars claimed that there are little study on the roles employees play in providing quality restaurant service [9], [10]. Therefore, the focus of this research is to understand the extent to which employee service, cleanliness, and facility offered by retailers affect customer behaviour in a café. The research objectives are aimed at actual customers of cafes to enhance overall research results and their contribution to the knowledge of service behaviour.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Detailed submission guidelines can be found on the author in today's world, many companies focus more on customer behaviour because it helps them to find out how customers think, feel and choose their products and services. Every customer sees a restaurant atmosphere consciously or unconsciously and knows whether he is at ease. In addition, the interpretation and choice-making by the customer are different among individuals and also affected by internal consumer behaviours, such as perception, attitude, and motivation and the external factors like family roles, peer influence and group influence [11]. In the meantime, the hygiene of service environments is often considered as a trivial matter, it is still a significant factor according to Hussain and Ali [12] because café cleanliness is one of the key factors in customers' evaluation of café quality. In this regard, understanding that customers' expectations of café cleanliness can be essential for successful café management according to Yoo [13] as the degree of cleanliness is of particular importance because it can influence customers' first impression service [14]. The evaluation eventually follows Bitner [15] model which comprises of cognitive, emotional and behavioural reactions of customers and employees have been influenced by the physical service environment [14]. Hence, cleanliness is part of a structured environment and an increasing factor of enhancing pleasant feeling among customers [14]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is

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proposed:

H₁: *Café cleanliness is positively related to consumer behaviour.*

Obviously, it takes more than a meal to create a great dining experience. Offering free high-speed Wi-Fi, clean toilets, electric plugs and comfortable furniture are some of the facilities to attract customers. The availability of Wi-Fi in the dining area will obviously provide interaction and communication advantages for young people, especially young consumers to visit the cafe. This is because Wi-Fi allows young people to browse the internet, especially the social networking sites Mustaffa et al. [16], while they are having their meals [17]. Cobanoglu, Bilgihan, Nusair, and Berezina [18] further emphasized the benefits of Wi-Fi in food establishments (such as restaurants). It was found that having Wi-Fi in a restaurant will enhance youth's intention to revisit the restaurant. However, Cobanoglu, Bilgihan, Nusair, and Berezina [18] focused on consumers in restaurants whose behaviour may diverge from the studies in-hand that concentrate on the customer of the café. The provision of Wi-Fi Internet access in the café can be an attractive tool for new customers, maintain customer loyalty and boost sales. Hotspots employ many different revenue models to drive this business [19]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: *Café facilities is positively related to consumer behaviour.*

Pizam and Ellis [20] reported that there are different harmonious combination of customer satisfaction in dining services, including meals and drinks, employees' behaviour and attitudes, food service and atmosphere. It has been noted that elements including food and beverages, employees behaviour and attitude, food services, and the atmosphere constitute a harmonious mix that represents customer fulfilment in food services. More specifically, customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is affected by employee behaviour, as a result of the employee-customer interaction process [4]. The main application of interpersonal features of employees in the service context is employee-customer service meetings. Service meetings depend on communication, customer orientation, personalization of service, adaptability of employees and the emotions of employees, among others [8]. Hence, a great focus on the commitment of frontline employees is the basis of service meetings that improve the overall performance and quality of the establishment. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: *Café employee service is positively related to consumer behaviour.*

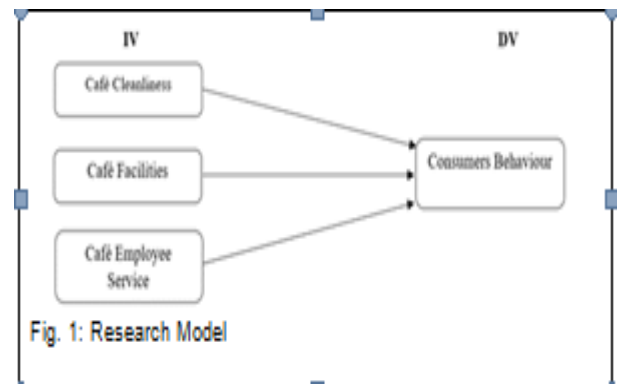


Fig. 1: Research Model

Fig. 1: Research Model

3 METHOD

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

This study was carried out in Selangor. Selangor was chosen due to the high number of café compared to other states [21]. The study involved regular customers of cafés around Selangor aged 18 and above. The customers were approached to participate in this study. The purposive sampling was used to choose the target respondents, where their familiarity and visit frequency were filtered. The sample size of this study is chosen using G*Power, which states that the minimum sample size is 185 respondents since the population of Selangor is 6.47 million. Sekaran and Bougie [22] noted that a sample size of 30 to 500 is sufficient for research. Hence, the sample size of 400 respondents was set. In this study, only 320 questionnaires were returned back and 312 questionnaires were considered valid for analysis. The questionnaire was divided into Section A (independent variable), Section B (demographic profile) and Section C (dependent variable). The questions in the questionnaire used the Likert scale and semantic scale, which is designed to examine the degree of the respondents' agreement to the statement. This study used a 5-point Likert scale for the independent variable and 7 Likert-scale for the dependent variable. Two different types of scales were used to reduce common method bias when the respondent was answering the questionnaire [23]. Before executing the actual collection of data, a pre-test and pilot study was conducted. A pre-test was done to identify problems such as unclear wording [24]. 5 respondents, 3 lecturers and 3 students from University Malaysia Kelantan were approached to execute the pre-test. The next step involved a focus group of 10 consumers followed by a pilot study with 40 consumers. There were only 340 sets of responses returned and after the data cleaning procedure, only 312 were retained for further analysis. The data were analyzed with Partial Least Square.

3.2 Measure

The data were gathered within a month. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the 312 cafe consumers that responded to this survey and their demographic profile.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' PROFILE (N=312)

Demographic Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	127	40.7
	Female	185	59.3
Age	18-26	182	58.3
	27-36	63	20.2
	37-46	51	16.3
	47 and above	16	5.1
Marital Status	Single	215	68.9
	Married	97	31.1
	Divorce	0	0
Races	Malay	262	84.0
	Chinese	26	8.3
	India	19	6.1
	Other	5	1.6
Income	< RM 1,000	176	56.4
	RM 1,001 – RM 2,000	39	12.5
	RM 2,001 – RM 3,000	58	18.6
	< RM 4,000	39	12.5
Occupation	Student	175	56.1
	Private Sector	71	22.8
	Self-employed	16	5.1
	Professional	12	3.8
	Government	37	11.9
Recent Visit	Housewife	1	0.3
	Past one week	197	63.1
	Past two weeks	45	14.4
	A month ago	21	6.7
Reason to visit	More than a month ago	49	15.7
	Food and beverage	225	72.1
	Brand	3	1.0
	Facility	22	7.1
Frequency of visit	Café Environment	62	19.9
	Once a month	101	32.4
	2-3 times a month	88	28.2
	3-4 times a month	32	10.3
	More than 5 times a month	91	29.2

TABLE 2
MEASUREMENT MODEL

Construct	Item	Loadings	AVE	CR	
Café Cleanliness	CC1	The cleanliness of the café increases my perception of the food quality.	0.847	0.703	0.922
	CC2	The cleanliness of the dining set will affect my appetite.	0.849		
	CC3	Pleasant air creates comfortable environment of the café.	0.854		
	CC4	The cleanliness of the café increases my desire to stay longer in the café.	0.840		
Café Facilities	CF1	The fact that the café is clean and tidy increases my well-being and comfort.	0.800	0.647	0.880
	CF2	The café has connection of Wi-Fi.	0.772		
	CF3	The seats used in the café are comfortable.	0.869		
Café Employee Service	CF5	The café has clean restrooms.	0.805	0.600	0.882
	CE1	Fully air-conditioned environment makes me comfortable while in the café.	0.766		
Consumer Behaviour	CE2	The café employees are very helpful to the customers.	0.819	0.745	0.936
	CE3	The café employees provides prompt and quick services.	0.798		
	CE4	The staffs serve the meals exactly as you ordered it.	0.748		
	CE5	The café employees able to provide information about the menu and its ingredients.	0.713		
	CB1	The café employees make you feel comfortable and confident when dealing with them.	0.791		
Consumer Behaviour	CB2	It's a nice experience to spend my time in a café with a good environment.	0.895	0.745	0.936
	CB3	I am more likely to dine again at this café next time.	0.833		
	CB4	When I feel satisfied with the environment in the café, I will say positive things about it to others.	0.864		
	CB5	I would like to spend more money on a good environment of café.	0.825		
		I would encourage my friends and family to visit a good environment café.	0.896		

CC = Café Cleanliness, CF = Café Facilities, CE= Café Employee Service, CB = Consumer Behaviour

4 FINDINGS

The hypothesis for research was tested using a Partial Least Square (PLS) based on structural equation modelling. In order to determine the significance levels for loading, weights and path coefficients, SmartPLS 3.0 with the application of a bootstrapping technique was employed [25]. The validity and goodness of the measurement model were first tested, followed by an examination of the relationships outlined by the structural model, in accordance with the two-stage analytical procedure as suggested by [26].

4.1 Measurement Model Estimation

Before testing the hypothesized model, the measurement model of all constructs was checked for reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Table 2 shows the values obtained from the measurement model analysis. According to Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt [27], loadings values that equal to or greater than 0.70, is acceptable [28]. Table 2 shows that all loadings are higher than 0.70. The average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs was above 0.5 [29], while the composite reliability scores (CR) were above 0.7 [27]. From this result, it is concluded that there is convergent validity.

The results for the discriminant validity test are shown in Table 3. The AVE of each construct should be more acute than the correlation between the model and any other structures [30], [31]. Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt [32] had suggested an alternative approach to evaluating discriminant validity which is Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. As shown in Table 3, this criterion is met by all constructs. This indicates that the constructs have discriminating validity. Kline [33] suggests that to show sufficient discriminant validity, the value lesser than 0.85 indicates that there is discriminant validity.

TABLE 3
DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

	Cafe Cleanliness	Cafe Employee Service	Cafe Facilities	Consumer Behaviour
Cafe Cleanliness	0.703			
Cafe Employee Service	0.602	0.600		
Cafe Facilities	0.595	0.621	0.647	
Consumer Behaviour	0.532	0.536	0.532	0.936

The loadings of all constructs that fulfil this criterion as shown in Table 4. This allows us to conclude that discriminant validity is achieved.

TABLE 4
CROSS LOADINGS

	Cafe Cleanliness	Cafe Employee Service	Cafe Facilities	Consumer Behaviour
CC1	0.847	0.505	0.473	0.423
CC2	0.849	0.463	0.428	0.389
CC3	0.854	0.427	0.428	0.366
CC4	0.840	0.415	0.452	0.433
CC5	0.800	0.389	0.366	0.418
CES1	0.459	0.819	0.439	0.410
CES2	0.388	0.798	0.406	0.350
CES3	0.451	0.748	0.411	0.380
CES4	0.325	0.713	0.345	0.292
CES5	0.392	0.791	0.418	0.387
CF1	0.348	0.326	0.772	0.287
CF2	0.402	0.488	0.869	0.432
CF3	0.444	0.454	0.805	0.358
CF5	0.446	0.394	0.766	0.411
CB1	0.489	0.400	0.422	0.895
CB2	0.406	0.467	0.445	0.833
CB3	0.402	0.412	0.385	0.864
CB4	0.329	0.377	0.370	0.825
CB5	0.457	0.383	0.405	0.896

CC = Café Cleanliness, CF = Café Facilities, CE= Café Employee Service, CB = Consumer Behaviour

4.2 Structural Model Estimation

To estimate the structural model, the t-values were generated by a bootstrapping procedure with 5000 resamples. Figure 3 presents the structural model, while the results of the hypothesis test are presented in Table 5. As shown in Table 5, there is a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.254$, $p < 0.01$) between Café Cleanliness and Consumer Behaviour. Café Facilities is also positively related ($\beta = 0.224$, $p < 0.01$) to Consumer Behaviour. Café Employee Service and Consumer Behaviour are also positively related ($\beta = 0.223$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, H_1 , H_2 and H_3 were supported.

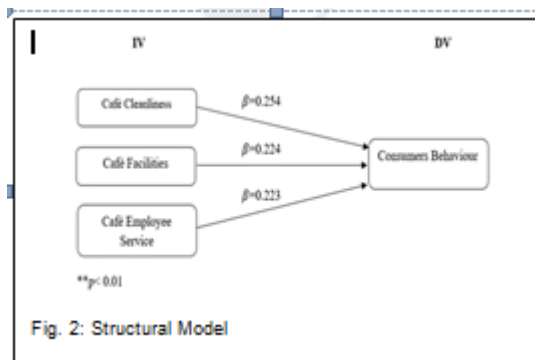


TABLE 5
RESULT OF THE HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T-Values	LL	UL	Decision
H_1	Café Cleanliness → Consumer Behaviour	0.254	0.059	4.285**	0.156	0.354	Supported
H_2	Café Facilities → Consumer Behaviour	0.224	0.058	3.867**	0.123	0.314	Supported
H_3	Café Employee Service → Consumer Behaviour	0.223	0.054	4.104**	0.133	0.310	Supported

Std = Standard, LL = Lower Level, UL= Upper Level

5 CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

The findings of the current study showed that all aspects of employee service affect on customer behaviour, whether negative or positive. This result is consistent with the literature and previous empirical studies. In examining the effects of employee service in retail environments in connection with the associated meaning, several suggestions have been put forward. The study also demonstrated the impact of behaviour, by measuring the perceived impact of employee conduct on customer's quality perceptions and their overall satisfaction, in addition to other stimuli for the store environments. The results of this study were also examined. Based on the consumer profile reactions and visit features, it was concluded that employee service has a tremendous impact on the overall consumer satisfaction irrespective of customer gender, national origins, visit purpose, number of visits and the length of stay. In conclusion, it can be revealed that human interaction is an important determining factor of consumer satisfaction and may forgive other issues when consumers are satisfied with human interaction. The retail sector depends heavily on providing service to customers, and it also depends on creating a positive consumer experience, not just about the product. Cafe employees can improve the image of the cafe and the degree of the perceived and actual quality of service by offering outstanding service. Café owners could also gain from these research results as it guides them to adjust strategies to participate and maintain highly effective, dedicated and contented employees. This, in turn, will satisfy the customers on the other. There are several limitations to the current study. First, this study only involved cafes in Selangor. Thus, future studies could include other types of food service as well as other service contexts, including hotels. Moreover, the present study involved consumers of café. Consequently, the study's findings are indicative and not conclusive. The field study was carried out at one particular time, a longitudinal study could be helpful, and employee involvement in the research study would be very useful. This research may be used to generate many notions for potential future research including conducting a study that is devoted specifically to identifying factors affecting employee behaviours and attitudes towards the work environment and examining the influence of employee performance in the workplace management treatment.

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