



Customer Perception of Service Quality Towards Fast Food Restaurants In Coimbatore City

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ABSTRACT

Service quality plays a significant strategic role in creating quality perceptions. Therefore, providing high quality customer service is essential for success and survival in the current competitive retail environment. Service quality not only comprises tangible attributes but also intangible/subjective attributes such as reliability which are difficult to measure specifically. The study aims to analyze different service quality attributes in successful fast food restaurants in Coimbatore city. The RSQS scale proposed by Dhabolkar was adopted with necessary modifications with the aim to fit to the Indian context. Results of the study shows that, there exists wide gap between the customer expectation and customer perception of service quality delivered at fast food restaurants in Coimbatore city. The study will be beneficial for the restaurants’ managers in understanding customers’ expectations and helps in formulating proper strategies accordingly.

KEYWORDS

Fast food restaurants, RSQS, service quality.

INTRODUCTION

“A service is any act or performance that one party can offer to another that is essentially intangible and does not result in the ownership of anything. Its production may or may not be tied to a physical product.” - Philip Roller. Customer expectations are assumed to be relatively consistent across customers of a given organization. What really generates changes in service quality is increase in the level of employee provision of service. There is ample evidence that consumers’ perception of service quality affects customer retention, store loyalty, satisfaction, repeat purchase behavior and word-of-mouth.

The study applied Dabholkar, Thorpe and Rentz’s (1996) retail service quality scale in measuring the gap between the customers’ expectations and their perceptions about the service quality of fast food restaurants in Coimbatore city. It proposed five dimensions of service quality, namely physical aspects, reliability, personal interaction, problem solving and policy.

The restaurant industry has witnessed diversified changes and fierce competition overtime. This has fostered its consumers to become more sophisticated, value and price conscious, demanding and thus switch swiftly to other alternatives in case of a single dodgy experience. Earlier the restaurants were more focused on food quality and taste but now they have to pay equal attention to factors like serving, atmosphere, interior decorations, tangibles, and location etc. Restaurants in order to offer the right service become bound to seek feedback directly from their consumers about their changing expectations and evaluation of their services.

Statement of the problem

In Coimbatore, there is a growing trend of visiting restaurants with families, colleagues and friends. At different occasions people also prefer to bring their guests to restaurants rather than serving them at home because of better food taste, pleasant atmosphere, affordable price and good service. Service quality as a tool can help retailers in not only improving their competitive positioning in the market but can also be used as a valuable tool for enhancing consumer satisfaction, retention and creating customer loyalty. A valid measure of service quality will help them in evaluating their performance and taking corrective action wherever required. On this basis, an attempt was made to understand the customer’s perception on individual item of retail service quality in the fast food restaurants in Coimbatore city.

Source of data

The study has used primary data which is collected from 200 customers visiting the five reputed fast food restaurants (40 from each restaurant) which includes KFC, MC Donalds, Subway, Pizza Hut and Dominos with a questionnaire in order to measure the service quality perceptions of customers. The reliability test of the Retail Service Quality Scale (RSQS) for both expectation and perception was conducted and it was found that the Cronbach’s alpha value () to be 0.879 and 0.901 respectively. The reliability of the data is valid and hence the tool Gap analysis was applied.

Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant difference between the expected and perceived service quality of various dimensions of fast food restaurants

TABLE I GAP ANALYSIS - EXPECTATION AND PERCEPTION OF SERVICE QUALITY OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS THE FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS

Dimen-sions	Expecta-tion mean	Perception mean	Differ-ence	t-sta-tistic	Signifi-cance
Physical Aspects	79.693	70.766	8.927	13.281	0.000
Reliability	82.184	69.600	12.584	17.529	0.000
Personal Interaction	81.350	69.980	11.370	19.574	0.000
Problem Solving	82.030	69.660	12.370	14.928	0.000
Policy	82.600	69.400	13.200	19.808	0.000
Overall	81.464	69.931	11.533	23.611	0.000

(p Value <= 0.05 Significant (S); p Value > 0.05 Not Significant (NS))

It is found that the expected service quality mean of physical aspects dimension (79.963) is significantly more than the perceived service quality mean (70.766) among the respondents towards the fast food restaurants. It is concluded that there exists significant difference (8.927) between the expected and perceived service quality of the physical aspects dimension of fast food restaurants.

It is found that the expected service quality mean of reliability dimension (82.184) is significantly more than the perceived service quality mean (69.600) among the respondents towards the fast food restaurants. It is concluded that there exists significant difference (12.584) between the expected and perceived service quality of the reliability dimension of fast food restaurants.

It is found that the expected service quality mean of personal interaction dimension (81.350) is significantly more than the perceived service quality mean (69.980) among the respondents towards the fast food restaurants. It is concluded that there exists significant difference (11.370) between the expected and perceived service quality of the personal interaction dimension of fast food restaurants.

It is found that the expected service quality mean of problem solving dimension (82.030) is significantly more than the perceived service quality mean (69.660) among the respondents towards the fast food restaurants. It is concluded that there exists significant difference (12.370) between the expected and perceived service quality of the problem solving dimension of fast food restaurants.

It is found that the expected service quality mean of policy dimension (82.600) is significantly more than the perceived service quality mean (69.400) among the respondents towards the fast food restaurants. It is concluded that there exists significant difference (13.200) between the expected and perceived service quality of the policy dimension of fast food restaurants.

It is found that the expected service quality mean of overall dimensions (81.464) is significantly more than the perceived service quality mean (69.931) among the respondents towards the fast food restaurants. It is concluded that there exists significant difference (11.533) between the expected and perceived service quality of the overall dimensions of fast food restaurants.

FINDINGS

- a Majority (62.4%) of the respondents are male.
- b Most (50%) of the respondents are in the age group of between 21 - 40 years.
- c Majority (56.2%) of the respondents are married.
- d Majority (35%) of the respondents have completed under graduation
- e Most (42.2%) of the respondents' family monthly income was between Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 40,000.
- f Majority (38%) of the respondents' favorite fast food restaurant was Dominos.
- g Most (29%) of the respondents select the fast food restaurant for serving tasty food.
- h Most (45%) of the respondents are not aware of the ingredients and nutritional values in the food being served at the fast food restaurants.
- i Most (46.2%) of the respondents visit fast food restaurants once in a month.
- j Most (41%) of the respondents spent between Rs.400 to Rs.600 per visit at the fast food restaurant.
- k Majority (38.8%) of the respondents opined that the price charged at the fast food restaurant is high.

SUGGESTIONS

- a The fast food restaurant with modern equipment is more empathetic towards customers.
- b Employees should be trained to handle the customers' complaints effectively.
- c The food served at the fast food restaurants must be delicious and presented in appetizing manner.
- d Employees of restaurant should have sufficient knowledge about dishes' recipe, ingredients etc.
- c Punctuality in delivering service, delivering service correctly for first time contributes to the reliability dimension of service quality.
- d Safety in transactions increases customer confidence which supports the policy dimension of service quality.

CONCLUSION

Service quality is an important aspect for fast food restaurants to know about customers' perception & RSQS is the root way to measure the effectiveness of service quality. The study reveals that the perceived performance on all dimensions fell short of expectations which indicate that the service quality

offered did not meet the customer's expectations on most aspects. The manager has to make sure that all service quality dimensions are simultaneously taken care of. Management should make strategies to effectively endorse these dimensions along with other marketing strategies to deliver the customer the best service quality.

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