

Assessing the Effects of Customer Satisfaction on the Loyalty Attributes of Buffet Restaurants

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Abstract

Purpose: The study's aim is to assess the impact of antecedents on customer satisfaction in Malaysian buffet restaurants. The antecedents include service quality and food quality respectively. This study also investigates the relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioral intention as well as re-patronage intention.

Design/methodology/approach: A survey questionnaire-based study was conducted in the Malaysian buffet restaurant sector. The Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to assess the hypothesised relationships.

Findings: According to the study's findings, service quality and food quality have a major impact on consumer satisfaction. The findings also show that customer satisfaction has a significant impact on behavioural intention and re-patronage intention. The findings also show that behavioural intention is significantly related to re-patronage intention.

Research limitations/implications: While customer satisfaction and loyalty have received a lot of attention in service management research, few studies have looked at the impact of behavioral intention on re-patronage intention. The effects of service quality and food quality on customer satisfaction were modelled in this study, as well as the relationship between customer satisfaction and behavioral intention and re-patronage intention in buffet restaurants.

Practical implications: It is hoped that these models will assist researchers and managers in understanding the critical factors that influence customer loyalty (i.e., behavioural intention and re-patronage intention) as well as satisfaction in the buffet restaurant industry and will assist them in making appropriate improvements.

Paper type: Research paper

Keywords: Behavioral intention, Customer satisfaction, Food quality, Re-patronage intention, Service quality, Buffet restaurant

Introduction

The customer aspect is very important in business because a firm operates solely to serve the customer. Thus, consumer behaviour has a direct impact on customer outcomes and organisational outcomes such as efficiency, revenues, and profitability. For that reason, in order to provide quality service and facilitate service creation, service providers must first understand customer behaviour. Understanding customer behaviour in service operations is a critical component of service delivery (Llach et al., 2013). The ability to become acquainted with customers, understand their feelings, and cater to their requirements is a factor that differentiates excellent organisations from merely mediocre ones (Zeithaml et al., 2009). Furthermore, the ability to discern the needs and expectations of customers is critical for providing outstanding service. Better service quality leads to increased profitability for the business organisation by maintaining customer satisfaction, retaining existing customers, and attracting new ones (Cronin et al., 2000). Therefore, fulfilling customer needs and retaining existing customers should be top priorities for any organisation.

Numerous studies have been undertaken on topics of customer satisfaction, service quality, and customer loyalty. It has been demonstrated that customer attitudes and provider behaviours have a major impact on all of these characteristics (Wu, 2013; Qin & Prybutok, 2008). However, only a few research focused on behavioural intention and re-patronage intention have been done because those variables are seen as being subordinate in the restaurant industry's maintenance of customer loyalty. Hence, this study was undertaken to solve this issue. Specifically, the current study examine the importance factors that influence customer satisfaction of buffet restaurants in the Malaysian context.

The restaurant sector is a dynamic, complex, and competitive that will continue to grow in the future. To compete and thrive in such a market, restaurant owners and operators will need to focus on enhancing their service quality. Furthermore, low switching costs in the restaurant industry are one of the factors that prompt customers to switch to another restaurant if they are dissatisfied with their experience (Han et al., 2009). According to the scholars, restaurant service quality was determined by factors such as price, ambience and cuisine, value for money, service, location, brand name, and image. (e.g., Ramanathan et al., 2016; Soriano, 2002). A study conducted by Bujisic et al. (2014) on the relationships between restaurant qualities attributes and customer behavioural intentions found that differences in a restaurant type result in variations of restaurant quality attributes and customer behavioural intentions. Therefore, this study has been decided to focus on buffet restaurant service to identify the relationship between service quality, food quality, customer satisfaction, behavioural intention and re-patronage intention respectively.

Obtaining customer opinions and comments has become a key step in improving restaurant service quality. The purpose of this research is to investigate the most important aspect in increasing the quality of buffet restaurant service. Therefore, the current study seeks to assess the impact of service and food quality on customer satisfaction at buffet restaurants. This study further analyses the impacts of customer satisfaction on re-patronage intention and behavioural intention. It also investigates the links between behavioural intention and re-patronage intention. It is expected to assess and comprehend the service quality performance of buffet restaurants more objectively. The findings could provide valuable insight into how buffet restaurant operators manage service quality and customer satisfaction. It also serves as a resource for the industry in establishing service quality improvement strategies and decision-making resources.

Literature Review

Organisations have shifted their focus from customer satisfaction to customer loyalty in order to increase financial performance (Caruana, 2002). Customer loyalty was examined in the current study using behavioural intention and re-patronage intentions. Re-patronage intentions and behavioural intentions are a subcategory of loyalty, according to Soderlund and Ohman (2005). Loyalty is defined as a customer's intention to repurchase and suggest a product or service from a provider when a particular level of satisfaction has been initiated (Law et al., 2004). A satisfied customer is more likely to return and spread favourable word of mouth about the company (Oliver, 1999). This study intends to analyse the relationship between customer satisfaction, behavioural intention, and re-patronage intention using an extended expectancy confirmation theory to better understand the impact of customer satisfaction on buffet restaurant service quality. This theory is concerned with the elements that influence customer satisfaction, product or service repurchases, and other related issues. The expectancy confirmation theory (ECT) has been frequently used to examine customer satisfaction and loyalty issues (e.g., re-patronage intentions, behavioural intentions). According to the ECT, customers' intent to buy products or continue using services is mostly decided by their satisfaction with earlier use of the product or service (Oliver, 1980).

Normally, after purchasing a product or service, customers develop positive or negative attitudes that influence their level of satisfaction. The ECT has two time dimensions: the first is consumers' expectations before purchasing a product or service, and the second is consumers' perceived performance after using the product or service. If customers' expectations are lower than perceived performance, which contributes to positive confirmation, their level of satisfaction will rise (Chen et al., 2018; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Since the 1960s, customer satisfaction has been a major focus of management and marketing research. Accordingly, customer satisfaction precursor customer loyalty (Barsky & Nash, 2003; Suh & Yi, 2006; Oliver, 1999). Examining the relationship between satisfaction and behaviour intention or re-patronage intention appears to be a common topic in service quality contacts (e.g., Qin & Prybutok, 2009; Madanoglu, 2004).

Intention includes a motivator that influences behaviour. Soderlund and Ohman (2005) investigated the theoretical and conceptual bases of intentions as a relationship between satisfaction and re-patronising behaviour. According to the findings of the study, they graded three different types of behavioural intention constructs based on their position on an evaluation "volition continuum". They categorise them as follows: "intentions-as-expectations" (the weakest); "intentions-as-plan" (in the centre); and "intentions-as-want" (in the extreme end). Many research, however, used the "intention-as-expectation" concept to analyse future behaviour after experiencing satisfaction (e.g., Cronin et al., 2000). The concept of "intentions-as-expectations" is regarded as behavioral expectations; that is, the expectation that an individual would do a specific behaviour in the future (Soderlund & Ohman, 2005). Subsequently, in the current study, behavioural intention is equated with "intention-as-expectation." Behavioural intents are possible behaviours that are likely to be prompted by satisfaction (Ajzen, 2002).

The primary principle of extended ECT in this study is that customer satisfaction influences behavioural intention and re-patronage intention; consequently, behavioural intention influences re-patronage intention. Service quality and food quality also influence customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction also has a positive effect upon behavioural intention (Qin et al., 2010) as well as re-patronage intention (Marinkovic et al., 2014; Ryu et al., 2012). Thus, a person with a high behavioural intention is more likely to engage in re-patronage than someone with a low intention. As a result, this study investigated the impact of service quality (SQ) and food quality (FQ) on customer satisfaction (CS), as well as the impact of CS on behavioural

intention (BI) and re-patronage intention (RP). This study additionally extended Soderlund and Ohman's (2005) research by looking at the relationship between behavioural intention and re-patronage intention (see Figure 1).

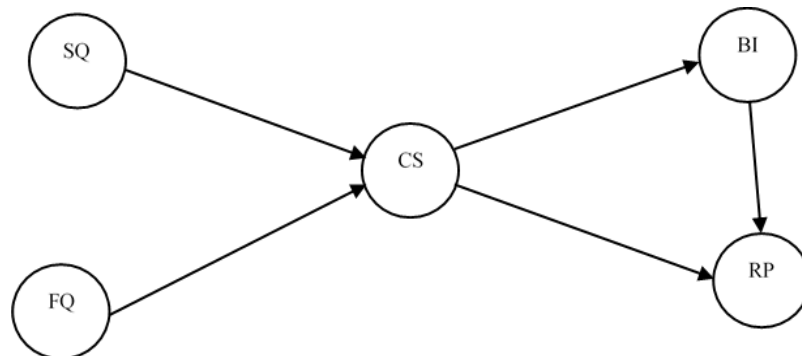


Figure 1: Research Framework

The study presents a brief literature assessment of the constructs and the building of a hypothetical basis for the relationship before outlining the linkages in the research framework.

Service Quality

Service quality has emerged as a critical concern for every service business; the objective of a service organisation is to offer service to customers and meet their needs. Service quality is defined by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1988) as the difference between customer expectation and customer perception, or the extent to which a service meets or surpasses customer expectations. Service quality is a difficult process in general. It is a more abstract and multifaceted construct that is more difficult for customers to evaluate. Therefore, multiple dimensions of service quality have been proposed (Brady et al., 2001; Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1988). Furthermore, service quality is context-specific, which means that a single generic service quality instrument is inappropriate for all services (Akter et al., 2013).

According to Mohamed and Azizan (2015) service quality and satisfaction are two different constructs since service quality is a continuous assessment for objects whereas satisfaction is only a temporary reaction. Satisfaction is defined as customer level of feeling on comparing outcome to expectation based on personal experience of an object (Qin et al., 2010). The customer must have used the product or service before to ascertain an appropriate satisfaction level. Satisfaction could be considered an emotional content; as such, it very much depends on a personal perspective. Customer satisfaction, according to Dabholkar et al. (2000), is a multi-dimensional and complex construct. Customer satisfaction with service is influenced by a specific service component, namely intangibility, perishability, and the inability to separate production and consumption (Parasuraman et al., 1985).

Finally, several studies on the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction have been undertaken. Customer satisfaction has been proven to have a strong association with service quality (Aftab et al., 2016; Afthanorhan et al., 2019; Cronin et al., 2000; Dabholkar et al., 2000). Customers experience service encounters during their meal at buffet restaurant, and their emotional feelings rise as a result. Customers may experience favourable emotions if items are replaced on a regular basis and used plates are swiftly withdrawn, which may influence their perception of service quality (Ramanathan et al., 2016). In the restaurant industry, researchers explored the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and discovered that service quality is a significant predictor of customer satisfaction (Aftab et al, 2016; Ramanathan et al., 2016). Many research in similar domains

have been undertaken, where service quality aspects have been assessed as predictors of customer satisfaction (Cronin et al., 2000; Law et al., 2004; Ryu et al., 2012). In the restaurant industry, service quality dimensions have been discovered to influence customer satisfaction (Qin & Prybutok, 2009; Qin et al., 2010). As a result of these findings, additional research into the relationship between the two conceptions in the context of this study is required. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

H1: Service quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Food Quality

In restaurant industries, food quality is one of the constructs most closely related to customer satisfaction. Food quality is a very important factor in restaurant industries because customers patronise a restaurant to eat and experience the food (Soriano, 2002). Therefore, food quality is one of the elements of customer satisfaction which need to be measured in conjunction with buffet restaurant service quality. Ramanathan et al. (2016) studied the relationship between factors impacting customer satisfaction at a Chinese buffet restaurant in the UK. Ramanathan et al. (2016) investigated the link between factors influencing customer satisfaction at a Chinese buffet restaurant in the United Kingdom. They discovered that food and service quality are two of the most critical aspects of customer satisfaction. Food quality is determined by food presentation, food safety, and availability of vegetarian dishes, authenticity, and localisation. Qin and Prybutok (2009) investigated the association between fast food restaurant service quality, food quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intention. They discovered that meal quality is related to customer satisfaction in a positive way. Additionally, Almohaimmeed (2017) discovered that food quality (taste, freshness of meals, and volume of food), hygiene, and responsiveness are major elements that contribute to customer satisfaction. Based on prior study findings in this sector, the food quality construct has been identified as one of the candidates that results in customer satisfaction in a restaurant context (Almohaimmeed, 2017; Ramanathan et al., 2016; Qin & Prybutok, 2009; Qin et al., 2010). This leads to the second hypothesis of this study, which is as follows:

H2: Food quality has a positive effect on customer satisfaction.

Customer Satisfaction with Behavioural Intention and Re-Patronage Intention

Most businesses would establish a strategy to boost customer satisfaction in order to achieve a competitive edge, influencing post-purchase behaviour such as repeat purchases, good word of mouth feedback, and customer loyalty (Wu, 2013). Customer satisfaction has become a focus for all organisations, including the restaurant industry, as a result of its direct relationship with organisational competitive advantages. Consequently, customer loyalty has been the topic of most concern among restaurants, and it is also the essential factor in determining whether or not a restaurant can continue to operate. This research assumes that behavioural intention and re-patronage intention are components of customer loyalty (Soderlund & Ohman, 2005).

Several research have found a substantial link between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Abdullah et al, 2018; Qin et al., 2010). According to studies on fast food restaurants, increased customer satisfaction leads to higher behavioural intentions (Gilbert et al., 2004). Wu (2013) discovered that customer satisfaction had a favourable effect on behavioural intention in the Taiwanese quick service restaurant industry. As a result, the following third hypothesis was proposed:

H3: Customer satisfaction has a positive effect on behavioural intention

Kim et al. (2013) investigated the interrelationships between perceived restaurant food quality, customer satisfaction, and re-patronage intentions in South Korean mid-to-upscale restaurants and discovered that satisfaction influences re-patronage intention. Accordingly, Ryu et al. (2012) conducted research on customer satisfaction in the full-service restaurant business and concluded that customer satisfaction influences consumer revisit intentions. Customer revisit intentions (also known as re-patronage intention in this study) are one of the manifestations of customer loyalty. Hotel re-patronage is highly influenced by hotel customer satisfaction in the hospitality industry (Hu et al., 2019). Therefore, this study makes the assumption that customer satisfaction and re-patronage intention are positively associated. In light of this, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H4: Consumer satisfaction has a positive effect on re-patronage intention.

Behavioural Intention and Re-Patronage Intention

In a restaurant context, Soderlund and Ohman (2005) investigate customers' perceptions of different intention constructs (i.e., intentions-as-expectations and intentions-as-want) in connection to future re-patronage intention. They discovered that not all intention constructs are equally related to re-patronage intentions. They discovered that the concept of intentions-as-expectations is favourably associated to re-patronage intentions in this scenario. As a result, behavioural intentions were conceptualised and operationalised as intentions-as-expectations in the current study. Therefore, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5: Behavioural intention has a positive effect on re-patronage intentions.

Methods

A quantitative technique is used in this study. It aims to assess the relationship between the latent constructs, specifically the impact of service and food quality on customer satisfaction, behavioural intention, and re-patronage intention. It also aimed to validate the impact of behavioural intention on re-patronage intention.

The study was conducted upon customers of buffet restaurants in Bandar Indera Mahkota, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. The area has a number of higher learning institutions, government departments and commercial establishments. Thus, many buffet restaurants have been established to cater for this population.

In the current study, the population was defined as adults and customers of a buffet restaurant at Bandar Indera Mahkota. Individuals who were at least 18 years old and had at least one meal at a buffet restaurant were eligible to participate in the study. In the absence of population lists from which to draw a random sample, the current study used the convenience sampling approach (e.g., Akter et al., 2013). For data analysis, this study employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM).

The rule of thumb for minimum sample size for PLS-SEM should be equivalent to ten times the greater of the number of indicators forming the most complicated formative construct or the greatest number of exogenous constructs leading to an endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2011). The largest group of exogenous constructs leading to an endogenous construct in the study was four. As a result, the minimal sample size for statistical analysis was 40 useable responses.

The study used a cross-sectional survey design. This study's demographic consisted of buffet restaurant patrons in the Kuantan area of Malaysia. The questionnaire was administered using an intercept method. The responders' participation was entirely voluntary and 320 valid

responses were gathered from a total of 500 survey forms distributed. This equates to a 64 percent response rate. Table 1 shows the demographic profiles of the respondents.

Table 1: The Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	158	49.4
	Female	162	59.3
Education	Primary/PMR/LCE	14	4.4
	SPM/MCE	53	16.6
	STPM/HSC/Diploma	56	17.5
	Bachelor	91	28.4
	Post Graduate	106	33.1
Age	18-29	67	20.9
	30-39	83	25.9
	40-49	83	25.9
	50 and above	87	27.2
Marital Status	Single	56	16.6
	Married	267	83.4

This study utilised a structured questionnaire approach based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire has 19 indicators that compose the exogenous and endogenous constructs. The indicators have been classified into five (5) latent constructs (see Table 2).

Table 2: Constructs and Sources

Construct	Item No	Item	Source
Service Quality (SQ)	SQ1	Food exactly as I like it	Ryu et al. (2012)
	SQ2	Prompt and quick service	
	SQ3	Always willing to help me	
	SQ4	Made me feel comfortable....	
Food Quality (FQ)	FQ1	Delicious	Ryu et al. (2012)
	FQ2	A variety of menu items	
	FQ3	Fresh food	
	FQ4	Presentation visually attractive	
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1	Satisfied with my overall experience ...	Ryu et al. (2012)
	CS2	Restaurant puts out a good mood	
	CS3	Enjoyed myself at this restaurant	
Behavioural Intention (BI)	BI1	Recommend this restaurant ...	Ryu et al. (2012); Söderlund (2006)
	BI2	Say positive things ...	
	BI3	Encourage others to visit ...	
	BI4	Talk about the restaurant ...	
Re-Patronage Intention (RP)	RP1	Will patronise the restaurant ...	Söderlund (2006); Jani & Han (2011)
	RP2	Sure I will patronise the restaurant again	
	RP3	Likely that I will patronise the restaurant	
	RP4	Even if another restaurant runs a special, ... I will still patronise the restaurant	

Result and Data Analysis

Statistical Method

The Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique was utilised to analyse the data in this study. Smart PLS 3.2.3 software was used to perform PLS testing on the research model (Ringle et al., 2015). PLS was used since this study focuses on the prediction of the dependent variable and the model is complicated in terms of both the number of interactions and the levels of dimensionality (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012). Another reason was that, while the study is based on previous models, it offers new measures and structural paths (Chin, 2010).

Common Methods Variance

In a self-report survey study, common method variance (CMV) is a potential source of error. In order to eliminate single-source method bias, the survey instrument indicators were grouped into their specific exogenous or endogenous constructs in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Respondent confidentiality and anonymity were tightly enforced, and all elements in the questionnaire relevant to scaling were very explicit and exact to ensure reduced chance for bias (Reio, 2010).

A second CMV test was carried out using the partial correlation technique with a marker variable (Lindella & Whitney, 2001). The marker variable in this study was a construct measured by five indicators. A correlation matrix was created using the smartPLS latent variable correlation analysis function to investigate the correlation coefficients of the SQ, FQ, CS, BI, RP, and the marker variable (MV). The results revealed that the marker variable had correlation coefficients that were near to zero in comparison to the other constructs (see Table 3). This finding gave additional assurance that the current study did not suffer from common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). When the marker variable was removed from the correlation analysis, there were no significant changes in the R Square of the endogenous construct (RP). That is, values of 0.218 before and 0.219 after the marker variable were introduced. The findings also revealed that common method bias was not a likely contaminant of the research findings.

Table 3: Latent Variable Correlation

	SQ	FQ	CS	BI	RP	MV
SQ	1.000					
FQ	0.322	1.000				
CS	0.644	0.486	1.000			
BI	0.601	0.356	0.444	1.000		
RP	0.387	0.578	0.366	0.423	1.000	
MV	0.109	0.156	0.124	0.074	0.083	1.000

Note: SQ (Service Quality), FQ (Food Quality), CS (Customer satisfaction), BI (Behavioural Intention), PR (Re-patronage Intention), MV (Marker Variable)

Measurement Model

In this study, the quality of buffet restaurant service was modelled using models with a reflective design (Mode A). Table 4 shows that all path loadings are significant and do not exceed the recommended threshold value (0.70). All of the constructs had four items on the original scale, including service quality (SQ), food quality (FQ), and behavioural intention (BI). However, since one of the item loadings on each construct was less than 0.70, the researchers chose to keep the items in order to maintain the content validity (Hair et al., 2014). Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) of all

constructs exceed the specified threshold values of 0.50 and 0.70 respectively, indicating adequate convergent validity and reliability.

Table 4: Convergent Validity and Reliability

Construct	Item	Loading	t-Value	AVE	CR
Service Quality (SQ)	SQ1	0.761	16.642	0.572	0.841
	SQ2	0.644	12.726		
	SQ3	0.760	28.924		
	SQ4	0.845	30.916		
Food quality (FQ)	FQ1	0.772	22.530	0.528	0.817
	FQ2	0.690	12.414		
	FQ3	0.724	16.804		
	FQ4	0.719	18.233		
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1	0.839	40.629	0.685	0.867
	CS2	0.853	48.205		
	CS3	0.789	36.306		
Behavioural Intention (BI)	BI1	0.834	36.428	0.563	0.837
	BI2	0.736	15.224		
	BI3	0.675	12.958		
	BI4	0.759	20.981		
Re-patronage Intention (RP)	RP1	0.733	17.975	0.623	0.868
	RP2	0.795	27.327		
	RP3	0.845	31.744		
	RP4	0.779	23.702		

To examine discriminant validity, the Fornelle Larcker Criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio criterion were utilised. The results of the discriminant validity test employing the Fornell Larcker criterion are shown in Table 5. Table 5 shows that all diagonal elements are significantly greater than off-diagonal elements, satisfying the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The HTMT ratio is shown in Table 6, and all values in Table 6 are less than the established threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). As a result, significant evidence of the constructs' discriminant validity is provided.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

	SQ	FQ	CS	BI	RP
SQ	0.756				
FQ	0.322	0.727			
CS	0.644	0.486	0.828		
BI	0.601	0.356	0.444	0.751	
RP	0.387	0.578	0.366	0.423	0.789

Table 6: Discriminant Validity (HTMT criterion)

	SQ	FQ	CS	BI	RP
SQ					
FQ	0.4				
CS	0.82	0.603			
BI	0.797	0.507	0.54		
RP	0.477	0.777	0.464	0.516	

Structural Model

To evaluate the statistical significance of the path coefficients, 500 bootstrapping resamples were conducted (Henseler et al., 2009). All the direct effects in Figure 2 are significant. As indicated in Figure 2 and Table 7, there was a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.544, p < 0.01$) between SQ and CS as well as a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.311, p < 0.01$) between FQ and CS. Both of these relationships accounted for 50.1 percent of the variance. These results support H1 and H2 respectively. There is a positive relationship ($\beta = 0.444, p < 0.01$) between CS and BI which accounts for 19.7 percent of the variance. These findings support H3. CS is similarly associated to RP ($\beta = 0.223, p < 0.01$), explaining 21.8 percent of the variation, hence supporting H4. The relationship between BI and RP is similarly positive ($\beta = 0.324, p < 0.01$), indicating that H5 is also supported.

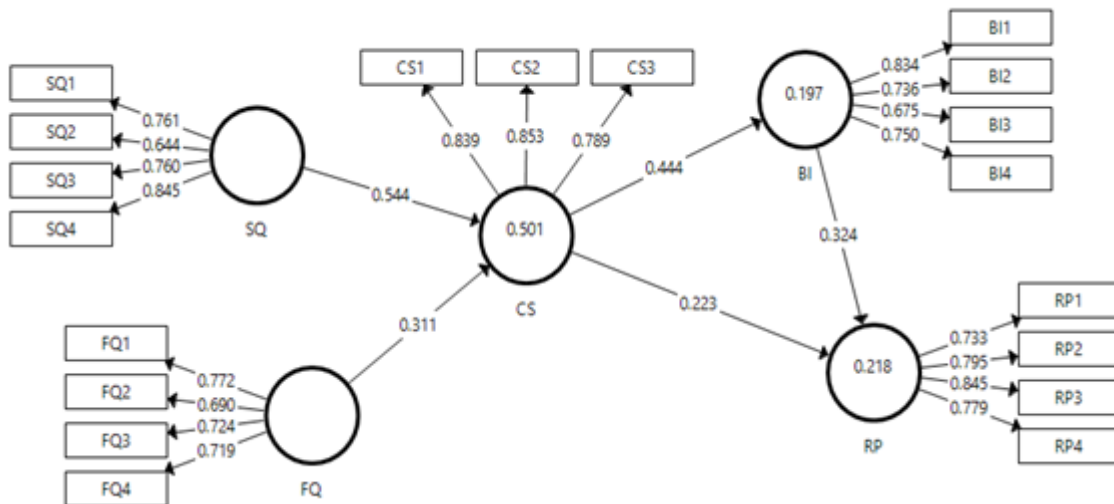


Figure 2: Structural Model

Table 7: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	t-Value	Decision
H1	SQ → CS	0.544	14.169**	Supported
H2	FQ → CS	0.311	8.354**	Supported
H3	CS → BI	0.444	8.773**	Supported
H4	CS → RP	0.223	3.493**	Supported
H5	BI → RP	0.324	5.085**	Supported

**p<0.01

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of service and food quality on not only customer satisfaction but also, indirectly, behavioural intentions and re-patronage intention. Furthermore, it investigates the influence of behavioural intention on re-patronage intention in

a Malaysian buffet restaurant context. According to the findings of this study, service and food quality have a substantial impact on consumer satisfaction. The significance of service and food quality is consistent with numerous earlier studies (Qin & Prybutok, 2009; Qin et al., 2010). Customer satisfaction had a significant impact on behavioural intention and also had a positive association with re-patronage intention, indicating that the buffet restaurant made its customers happy when they revisited and repurchased. Consumer satisfaction had a direct impact on re-patronage intention, which was consistent with earlier research findings. This study adds to the current service management literature by establishing a link between two dimensions of customer loyalty, namely behavioural intention and re-patronage intention, in the context of buffet restaurant service. The primary findings suggested that behavioural intention could influence re-patronage intention.

Theoretical Implications

According to the findings of this study, customer satisfaction at buffet restaurants is positively related to the quality of service and cuisine. These findings were consistent with prior research that identified the impact of service and food quality in connection to customer satisfaction (Caruana, 2002; Qin et al., 2010; Qin & Prybutok, 2009). This study also discovered that customer satisfaction influences future behavioural intentions and re-patronage intentions in a positive way. This research also implies that behavioural intention plays a role in establishing more positive re-patronage intentions.. These findings supported previous research that established a link between behavioural intention and re-patronage intention (Soderlund & Ohman, 2005). This study contributed to the service quality management literature in a unique way, in addition to confirming the findings of previous studies. This study clarified the interaction between the service quality, food quality, customer satisfaction, behavioural intention, and re-patronage intention in a buffet restaurant from a theoretical standpoint.

This study added to the existing literature by claiming that the relationship between service quality and food quality positively adds to customer satisfaction, confirming that service quality and food quality do actually have a major effect on re-patronage intention. As a result, this study could draw the conclusion that service quality and food quality were antecedents of customer satisfaction. If customers are satisfied with the service and food quality, it is expected that they would develop the intention and willingness to re-patronage to the buffet restaurant. Consequently, the strong interdependence of customer satisfaction, behavioural intention, and re-patronage intention should be extremely valuable to the restaurant sector. As a result, it is strongly advised that a buffet restaurant operator focus on these service quality and food quality aspects in order to instil more positive behavioural intention while also positively affecting re-patronage intention.

Practical and Social Implications

Malaysians have increasingly placed higher expectations and demands on the overall quality of restaurants as their standard of living has improved. As confirmed by this and prior studies, issues of service quality and food quality had the largest impact on customer satisfaction, favourably influencing behavioural intentions and re-patronage intentions (Caruana, 2002; Qin et al., 2010; Qin & Prybutok, 2009). The behavioural intention had a beneficial effect on the re-patronage intention as well. Thus, it has been established that buffet restaurant operators should strive to satisfy customers by providing high-quality service and cuisine, which can lead to positive customer loyalty (i.e., behavioural intention and re-patronage intention). Furthermore, behavioural intention is an important factor that determines customers' intentions to return to the restaurant. According to the study findings, restaurant managers can determine which qualities are important in influencing re-patronage intention. Restaurant owners should

arm themselves for a better grasp of the re-patronage phenomena, which contributes profit from more frequent visits, in addition to strengthening their marketing and being incredibly valuable in company planning. That is, increasing customer satisfaction through service and food quality is not a choice for restaurant owners, but rather a critical component of profit growth. Thus, service and food quality may be important indicators of customer satisfaction and loyalty to the buffet restaurant.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The current study's findings should be interpreted with caution. First, because this study is intended at investigating the Malaysian buffet restaurant business and only focused on a relatively small number of restaurants selected within a confined geographic area, generalisation of the results may not be possible. The study's findings are mostly useful to the Malaysian buffet restaurant business. As a result, the current study advises that this research be expanded across the country in the future to improve the findings' generalisability. The scope of the research should be broadened to include various sorts of food service sectors, both in Malaysia and outside. Furthermore, the research is based on customer perceptions but excludes restaurant operators' perspectives. A comprehensive comparison of these two perspectives is proposed by studying the inter-relationship of service quality, food quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty (i.e. behavioural intention and re-patronage intention).

Another relevant area for future research is to investigate additional characteristics that influence customer satisfaction in the Malaysian buffet restaurant service industry. In this study, the coefficient of determination (R square) implies that there are other characteristics that can explain satisfaction with the buffet service restaurant experience. The current study only looked at service and food quality as characteristics that contributed to consumer satisfaction. However, future research should incorporate additional factors such as price, restaurant ambience, and location. This study expects that by taking these qualities into account, researchers and buffet restaurant operators would acquire a better knowledge of the aspects that contribute to the restaurant business as a whole.

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