Affecting Customer Satisfaction on Choosing Mamak Restaurant in Penang, Malaysia

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between location and environment with customer satisfaction among customers of Mamak Restaurants. The idea behind study was to investigate why Mamak Restaurant is still in demand and why customers are satisfied with Mamak Restaurants even though their products are more often than not overly-priced as compared to other food and beverage establishments. Thus, this study focused on two factors that influences customer satisfaction which are location and environment, in order to further understand their relationship. A survey was conducted using a set of questionnaires, involving 84 respondents of Mamak Restaurants. The data obtained from the questionnaires was analyzed by using descriptive and correlation analysis. Finding revealed that both variables are related to customer satisfaction, with location having the stronger relationship. The results are in line with previous scholars where by location are some of important determinants for customer in deciding on restaurant selection.

INTRODUCTION

There is a major influence of food in the hospitality and tourism industry in Malaysia. The government has identified the hospitality and tourism industry – which includes the foodservice industry – as a high priority growth sector and is aggressively promoting Malaysia globally (Saeed, Josiam, & Ismail, 2000). This can clearly be seen from the range of foodservice establishments mushrooming in all sub-sectors of the industry, ranging from hotels, food retail, catering, health foodservice, food manufacturing and restaurants (Edvardsson, 2005).

Historically, Mamak food in Malaysia was introduced by Tamil Indians who brought with them a multitude of spices and flavors which have been passed down generations to become an important part of Malaysian food culture. The term Mamak refers to Tamil Muslims originated from South India but has migrated to various parts of Malaysia centuries ago (Farrindah, 2010; Lu, 2011). According to Lim (2010), their presence began to take root through marriage with local women and later through family operated businesses such as road side eateries selling Indian Muslim foods (the original Mamak), which later expanded to provision stores, money changers and book selling stores. However, the restaurant business ventured by the Mamak-society has been the most successful.
Besides the food, other attributes also contribute to the increase in popularity of these ethnic restaurants such as service. If the services is excellent, it contributes towards customer satisfaction (Firdaus, Zainoren, & Jamil, 2011), business operation hours, variety of foods, crowd, location and ambience. Ariffin (2002) indicated that longer business operation hours made the Mamak Restaurants popular among customers who trying to find food and a place to get together during odd hours. The contemporary Mamak-culture scene has changed from road side hawkers stalls to a higher end foodservice establishments such as bistros. Mamak-shops are housed in proper shop lots with exclusive dining areas utilizing air-conditioning sections and foldable chairs and tables laid out on the streets set in the late afternoon to cater the late night crowds. As the profile of their patrons become ethnically diverse it is not surprising that most Mamak Restaurants nowadays serve Chinese, Malay, Thai, and Western food apart from the original Indian Muslim food it has been serving since they started (Abdullah, 2006). According to (Zawawi & Ibrahim, 2012), Mamak Restaurants has ingrained itself in the Malaysian culture and part of their life and daily activities as it has even been compared to westerners going to bars and pubs.

Mamak restaurants just like the other restaurant businesses, value the importance of customer satisfaction as it one of the most important element in business and it has a relationship with profitability (Deng, Lu, Wei, & Zhang, 2009). In Malaysia, there are a lot of restaurants which are readily available for customers but most often than not they still choose to dine in a Mamak Restaurant although usually Mamak Restaurants are generally expensive. As such, the researchers were interested to try study and try to find out factors that relate to Mamak Restaurants customer satisfaction.

The hypotheses of this study are as follows;

H1: There is a relationship between location of Mamak Restaurant and customer satisfaction.
H2: There is a relationship between environment of Mamak Restaurant and customer satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The nature of this study is descriptive because it involves the inspection and describing aspects of the subject in a natural setting. A set of questionnaires were adapted from the previous scholars and were tested for the reliability. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents with the response rate of 84%. This research used one of the non-probability sampling techniques which is convenient sampling.

The questionnaire consists of four sections. The first section describes the demographic profile of the respondents, while in section two, the first variable was measured which is location. Section three measured the second variable, which is the environment. The last section measured the relationship of both variables with customer satisfaction.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Respondent’s Profile
A total of 100 set of questionnaires were distributed and only 84 completed responses were obtained. A 16 set of questionnaire were rendered unusable, due to incomplete or insufficient responses. 59 out of 84 students are male represent 70.2%, while 25 respondents are female which represent 29.8%. Respondents frequently visit Mamak Restaurant are between 1-2 times per week which 25 respondents out of 84 where represent 29.8%. Besides that, 3-4 times per week the 54 respondents visiting the Mamak Restaurant where represent 64.3% while more than 7 times per week were represent 5 respondents which is 6.0%. From the analysis, the highest amount that respondents spend is range between RM5-RM10 which 47 respondents represent 56.0%. 24 respondents are spending between RM11-RM15 and represent 28.6% while the range less RM5 are represent 7 respondents out of 84 which are 8.3%. Lastly, is the range more than RM15 which is only 6 respondents where represent 7.1%.

Reliability Test
Pallant (2005) stated that Cronbach’s alpha is the most common indicators used for internal consistency. It is also used to demonstrate the consistency of respondent’s answer of the questions in the survey, are positively correlated and consistent to one another(Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Location produced result Cronbach Alpha of 0.862, which considered had a good internal consistency. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the environment variable has shown an excellent value of 0.939. Thus, the value has proven that this variable is much reliable and can be used for further analysis.
TABLE 1
RESULT OF RELIABILITY TEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No of Item</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the degree of linear association between location and environment towards customer satisfaction of Mamak Restaurant. The results showed that the Pearson correlation that exist between location variable and customer satisfaction produce an r value of r = 0.634 with significant value of p = <0.05, which indicated that both of the variables have a strong positive linear relationship. On the other hand, results also showed an r value of r = 0.420 with significant value of p = <0.05 between environment and customer satisfaction. The result has shown that the variables have a moderate positive linear relationship.

TABLE 2
CORRELATION ANALYSIS BETWEEN INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND DEPENDENT VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RL</th>
<th>RE</th>
<th>CS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant Location</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant Environment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.420</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Satisfaction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

Environment is the condition that will affect the behavior and development of somebody or something like the physical condition which had stated in the (Oxford Dictionary, 2005). Mamak Restaurant environment is happening, noisy and always busy. According to Liu and Jang (2009), throughout dining at Mamak Restaurants, elements that can add to environment satisfaction are included all the interior designs and decors, pleasant music with moderate loudness, good lighting, layout and color.

Strategic location is also another factor because most of the restaurant is nearby residential, campus and office area. Borjesson, Csanaky and Vinni (2005) had found that there are a lot of reasons for choosing a restaurant and two of the reasons were ease of use parking and convenience of location. Location appeared to be more important in motivating food choices for breakfast, lunch, and dinner compared to other eating occasions. Cox and Brittain (2000) had stated that, having the right location is important in terms of convenience to the customer. Results of the study on Mamak Restaurant also indicated that besides operation hours, location is among the second most important factor influencing customer patronizing (Mohammad Ramly, Ahmad & Ahmadin, 2004).

In summary, the two hypotheses used and tested in this study are:

H1: There is a relationship between location of Mamak Restaurant and customer satisfaction

The findings are similar to the previous researcher such as by Wood (1995) which in his study he found that location is one of the features restaurant that give the restaurant particular identity and quality which is directly and indirectly interfere in the perform of dining and post-purchase performance. This also has been agreed by Steward (2006), where location can give an inspired to an individual to make the selection to dine at out.

H2: There is a relationship between environment of Mamak Restaurant and customer satisfaction.

According to Lim (2010) and Chang (2000), environment and customer satisfaction have a positive relationship, where by environment gives customers figure a rational picture before any affecting the response or judgment of specific service environments. Besides, Ryu & Han, (2010), in their study proved that customers are increasingly put a best on saving time as well as better eating environment if compared to previous time. Besides, a study by Kokko (2005) suggests that environment in a restaurant is frequently perceived by customers as the single most positive characteristic of the restaurant, and even more important than food served.

CONCLUSION

This research was executed in order to identify the relationship between location and environment towards customer satisfaction among customers in Mamak Restaurant. The subject of this study is customers of Mamak Restaurant and a total of 84 respondents were selected as sample. Overall, the results obtained showed that the two of the variables have a strong and moderate relationship with the customer satisfaction among customers of Mamak Restaurant. Thus, it is reasonable enough to accept the stated hypothesis. In line with this, the objective
of this study has also been achieved. This study also proved that even some of the factors are not reached to the maximum level; Mamak Restaurant still can survive in the business due to its popularity among the young people.

There are some limitations for this study. Firstly, the researchers only took two elements for this study. Which would not provide a complete view of the matter. Therefore, rather than two elements for the next study the researchers include the other elements to conduct the study to provide better results. Besides that, this study also faces with the limitation regarding the accuracy of the data. This is because the data collected randomly from customers in the Mamak Restaurant. The researchers specify the exact number of respondents. Therefore, there might be misinterpretation of the data collected due to limited respondent. The reliability of the data also is an issue for the researchers to interpret. It could be that the respondent did not answer the questionnaire honestly and truthfully. Instead, they picked randomly without giving a second thought about the questions. Unfortunately, the researchers have no way of confirming this uncertainty. This is also probably due to lack of varieties in the data collection method. Only questionnaire is used to collect data. For future researchers, they could probably be more creative in their data collecting method such as focus group discussion, to get a more accurate and reliable data.

REFERENCES


