



***ANTECEDENTS OF BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION AND PRIORITIZATION OF
RESTAURANT ATTRIBUTES AFFECTING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AT
CASUAL DINING RESTAURANTS IN THE KLANG VALLEY, MALAYSIA***

MAHSHID EBRAHIMIAN

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By

MAHSHID EBRAHIMIAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

May 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in
fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chair : Assoc. Prof. Mohhidin Othman, PhD
Faculty : Food Science and Technology

The ultimate goal of any business especially in hospitality industry is customer satisfaction, which is defined as a customer's perception of the performance of a product or service, with regard to his/her expectations. It is further identified as an important antecedent to repurchasing, loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and long-term relationships with the company. As a result, restaurant managers have changed their focus to the characteristics of customer behavioral intentions rather than just satisfaction. Therefore, investigating the most important and affective attributes that lead to customer satisfaction and positive behavioral intentions is critical for restaurant success. Despite the extensive literature in the restaurant segment, there are gaps in the analysis of customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in terms of a comprehensive model including service quality, food quality, physical environment quality, price, and technology along with the attitude towards behavior, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. Therefore, the current study will fill the gap by considering aspects that were not included in the previous researches. Moreover, previous studies have applied the traditional view of satisfaction indicating that the attribute performance has a symmetrical correlation with satisfaction. While, the nonlinear and asymmetric relationships between attribute performance and satisfaction proposes that the performance of all attributes do not have equal and same effect on customer satisfaction. Thus, integrating the asymmetric effects of restaurant aspects on satisfaction allows restaurant managers to identify features that are more likely to trigger satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Therefore, in this study, the structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to evaluate the relationships between customer satisfaction, behavioral intentions and the independent variables of service quality, food quality, physical environment, price and technology. The effect of restaurant attributes along with the effect of TPB constructs on behavioral intentions were also examined. In addition, the Importance–Performance Analysis (IPA) approach was used to assess the key-drivers of customer satisfaction and their asymmetric effects. Data for this

quantitative study was collected from 400 customers at casual dining restaurants located in KLCC and Pavilion shopping malls. Findings showed that there is a statistically significant relationship between customer satisfaction and each of the independent variables. It also revealed that customer satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between restaurant attributes and behavioral intentions. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant positive association between satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The IPA results showed that restaurant attractiveness, employee knowledge, fair menu price and availability of smart phone application play the role of basic factors (dissatisfiers) in casual dining restaurants, and that the casual dining outlets should improve these important areas to create satisfied customers. In addition, restaurant cleanliness, bill accuracy, safe transaction, polite and experienced employees, food taste and quality, ambient conditions, seating comfort, appropriate portion size, and Wi-Fi availability are considered as the performance factors (hybrids), which appear to be key attributes for casual dining restaurants' success. Almost all empathy parameters of the service-related attributes, menu variety, price, food presentation, restaurant colour, dining privacy and direction' sings are considered as the excitement factors (satisfier) in casual restaurants, which are typically unexpected by customers. Overall, this study suggested that basic factors and performance factors are the pivotal aspects to create satisfied customers and positive post-dining behavioral intentions. Therefore, results of this study shed light on prioritizing focus and resource allocation by the casual dining restaurant managers based on attributes contributions to customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in order to generate higher profit for the restaurant. Besides, these findings can also be used by restaurant managers to set customer-oriented guidelines and strategies in order to make the casual dining outlet a more popular choice.

Keywords: casual dining restaurants, restaurant attributes, customer satisfaction, behavioral intentions

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**ANTESEDEN BAGI NIAT TINGKAH LAKU DAN KEUTAMAAN CIRI-CIRI
RESTORAN YANG MEMPENGARUHI KEPUASAN PELANGGAN DI
RESTORAN MAKANAN BERKONSEP KASUAL DI LEMBAH KLANG,
MALAYSIA**

Oleh

MAHSHID EBRAHIMIAN

Mei 2019

Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Mohhidin Othman, PhD
Fakulti : Sains dan Teknologi Makanan

Matlamat utama sesebuah perniagaan terutamanya di industri hospitaliti ialah kepuasan pelanggan, yang ditakrifkan sebagai tanggapan pelanggan terhadap prestasi sesuatu produk atau perkhidmatan, yang berdasarkan kepada jangkaan mereka. Seterusnya ia dikenal pasti sebagai prekursor penting bagi pembelian berulang, kesetiaan, sebaran mulut yang positif dan hubungan jangka panjang dengan syarikat. Hasilnya, pengurus restoran telah mengubah fokus mereka kepada ciri-ciri keinginan tingkah laku pelanggan berbanding sekadar hanya kepada kepuasan. Justeru, penyiasatan keatas sifat-sifat paling penting dan afektif yang membawa kepada kepuasan pelanggan dan keinginan tingkah laku positif adalah kritikal bagi kejayaan sesebuah restoran. Walaupun terdapat banyak literatur dalam bidang restoran, terdapat jurang dalam analisis kepuasan pelanggan dan keinginan tingkah laku daripada segi model yang menyeluruh termasuk kualiti perkhidmatan, kualiti makanan, kualiti persekitaran fizikal, harga dan teknologi, di samping sikap terhadap tingkah laku, norma subjektif dan kawalan kelakuan anggapan. Oleh itu, kajian ini akan mengisi ruang tersebut dengan mempertimbangkan aspek-aspek yang tidak diliputi oleh kajian terdahulu. Tambahan pula, kajian terdahulu telah mengguna pakai pandangan tradisional kepuasan yang menunjukkan sifat prestasi mempunyai korelasi simetri dengan kepuasan. Manakala, hubungan tak linear dan tak simetri antara prestasi dan kepuasan mencadangkan bahawa prestasi semua sifat tidak mempunyai kesan yang setara dan sama terhadap kepuasan pelanggan. Maka, mengintegrasikan kesan tak simetri aspek restoran terhadap kepuasan membolehkan pengurus restoran untuk mengenal pasti sifat yang lebih berkemungkinan untuk mencetus kepuasan atau ketidakpuasan. Justeru, dalam kajian ini pemodelan persamaan struktur (SEM) telah digunakan untuk menilai hubungan antara kepuasan pelanggan, keinginan kelakuan dengan pemboleh ubah tak bersandar: kualiti perkhidmatan, kualiti makanan, persekitaran fizikal, harga dan teknologi. Kesan sifat restoran di samping kesan binaan TPB

terhadap keinginan tingkah laku juga diteliti. Tambahan lagi, pendekatan Analisis Kepentingan-Prestasi (IPA) telah digunakan untuk menilai pemacu penting kepuasan pelanggan dan kesan tak simetri mereka. Data kajian kuantitatif ini dikumpul daripada 400 pelanggan restoran makanan kasual di KLCC dan pusat membeli-belah Pavilion. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapatnya hubungan bermakna antara kepuasan pelanggan dengan setiap pemboleh ubah tidak bersandar. Ia juga mendedahkan kepuasan pelanggan menjadi pengantara penting bagi hubungan antara ciri-ciri restoran dan keinginan tingkah laku. Tambahan lagi, terdapat hubungan positif yang bermakna antara kepuasan dan keinginan tingkah laku. Keputusan IPA menunjukkan bahawa daya tarikan restoran, pengetahuan pekerja, harga menu yang berpatutan dan kewujudan aplikasi telefon pintar memainkan peranan sebagai faktor-faktor asas (bukan pemuas) dalam restoran makanan kasual, dan justru itu restoran makanan kasual patut menekankan bahagian penting ini bagi membanyakkan lagi pelanggan yang berpuas hati. Di samping itu, kebersihan restoran, ketepatan bil, keselamatan urusniaga, pekerja yang sopan dan berpengalaman, rasa dan kualiti makanan, keselesaan tempat duduk, kesesuaian saiz hidangan dan ketersediaan Wi-fi dianggap sebagai faktor prestasi (hibrid), yang merupakan sifat utama kejayaan restoran makanan kasual. Hampir kesemua parameter empati sifat berkaitan perkhidmatan: kepelbagaian menu, harga, persembahan makanan, warna restoran, privasi makan dan tanda arah dianggap sebagai faktor keterujaan (pemuas) dalam restoran kasual, yang secara tipikalnya tidak dijangka oleh pelanggan. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa faktor-faktor asas dan faktor-faktor prestasi merupakan aspek utama untuk mewujudkan pelanggan yang berpuas hati dan keinginan tingkah laku pasca makan yang positif. Oleh itu, dapatan kajian ini mendedahkan fokus keutamaan dan pengagihan sumber oleh pengurus restoran makanan kasual berdasarkan sifat-sifat yang menyumbang kepada kepuasan pelanggan dan keinginan tingkah laku dalam menjana keuntungan yang lebih tinggi untuk sesebuah restoran. Di samping itu, dapatan ini boleh juga digunakan oleh pengurus restoran bagi menyediakan panduan berorientasikan pelanggan dan membuat strategi bagi menjadikan restoran makanan kasual sebagai pilihan yang lebih popular.

Kata kunci: restoran makanan kasual, atribut restoran, kepuasan pelanggan, keinginan tingkah laku

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Mohhidin Othman, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Food Science and Technology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Ainul Zakiah Abu Bakar, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Food Science and Technology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Ahmad Fareed Ismail, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Food Science and Technology
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

Declaration by graduate student

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Name and Matric No.: Mahshid Ebrahimi, GS36715

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Signature: _____

Name of Chairman of
Supervisory
Committee:

Associate Professor Dr. Mohhidin Othman

Signature: _____

Name of Member of
Supervisory
Committee:

Dr. Ainul Zakiah Abu Bakar

Signature: _____

Name of Member
of Supervisory
Committee:

Dr. Ahmad Fareed Ismail

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------|---|
| AVE | Average Variance Extracted |
| CMV | Common Method Variance |
| VIF | Variance Inflation Factor |
| SEM | Structural Equation Modeling |
| PLS | Partial Least Squares |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| CR | Composite Reliability |
| CA | Cronbach's Alpha |
| R ² | Coefficient of Determination |
| Q ² | Predictive Relevance |
| f ² | Effect Size |
| TRA | Theory of Reasoned Action |
| TPB | Theory of Planned Behavior |
| EDT | Expectation Disconfirmation Theory |
| IPA | Importance Performance Analysis |
| IMP | Importance |
| PR | Performance |
| SD | Standard Deviation |
| M | Mean |
| HRI | Hotel Restaurant Industry |
| RM | Ringgit of Malaysia |
| N | Population Size |
| CSI | Customer Satisfaction Index |
| CS | Customer Satisfaction |
| BI | Behavioral Intention |
| FQ | Food Quality |
| SQ | Service Quality |
| PEQ | Physical Environment Quality |
| FAA | Facility Aesthetics and Artifacts |
| Am.C | Ambience Condition |
| Prc | Price |
| Tg | Tangibles |
| Res | Responsiveness |
| REL | Reliability |
| Tech | Technology |
| SN | Subjective Norm |
| SC | Seating Comfort |
| SL | Spatial Layout |
| ATB | Attitude towards Behavior |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter begins with the background of the study consisting of an overview of the fundamental role of customer satisfaction in choosing whether to dine in a restaurant, and the effect of satisfied customer on behavioural intentions. Next, the problem statement, the research objectives, and contributions of study are mentioned. The final section is the list of definitions of important terms used in order to get a clear picture of the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

One of the main development areas under the Malaysian government's economic transformation plan is tourism sector (Mosbah & Khuja, 2014). It has been planned to develop Malaysia into a leading tourism nation by transforming the tourism industry into a major, viable, sustainable, and quality sector. Since food as the basic need for human survival plays a key role in attracting more food travelers, this could help position Malaysia as one of the popular food destinations in Asia. In addition, Kuala Lumpur was named as the second-best city for shopping in the Asia-Pacific region by the 2012 Globe Shopper Index, for both locals and tourists, because of its large-scale malls concentration (Malaysia Food Service Profile, 2014). Along with the shopping malls' position as tourist attractions, spending time at shopping malls is considered as a leisure activity for locals. One of the essential services at any shopping mall is the provision of food and beverages to the visitors.

Malaysia's food service sector has gained a rapid and remarkable growth in recent years. Restaurants, hotels, resorts, and the institutional sub-sectors represent the food service sector. The restaurant sub-sector represents 70% of the total food service sales. It is followed by resorts and hotels (8%) and food catering services (5%) (Ismail & Yusop, 2014). Eating out has become a major food consumption trend in urban areas especially in developing countries for people who are busy with a hectic working lifestyle. Although, it is not a new phenomenon in Malaysia, but changing lifestyles, household income, the increasing number of working women, time saving, and convenience factors through dining out motivate many people to have their meals outside their homes. Moreover, dining out may also be beneficial for social interactions since the restaurant itself creates a good environment, where people can spend their time without any pressure to socialize with their friends and families (Ryu & Han, 2011; Ryu, Lee, & Kim, 2012).

While full-service restaurant is the main foodservice subsector in Malaysia

(Malaysia Food Service Profile, 2014), the casual dining sector is gaining popularity due to increasing urbanization and changing lifestyles in urban areas. As the food service segment continues to grow, service quality has received more attention. When choosing a casual dining restaurant, the customers have many choices and if a restaurant is not satisfying, they will select another restaurant. Therefore, in order to succeed in the highly competitive casual dining business in Malaysia, restaurateurs are required to deliver a good quality of service and product, which lead to high level of satisfaction, customer loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth.

Achieving satisfaction that would result in loyalty with key customers is not a matter of choice for businesses any longer, but also has become a core marketing objective in all industries. Some strategic ways to build a loyal customer base include focusing on building closer ties with key consumers, generating a value perception for consumers, anticipating and responding to the needs and wants of the consumers, and creating a high level of satisfaction with every interaction (Sukhu, Bilgihan, & Seo, 2017).

According to Heung et al (2000), customer expectation is one of the key determinant factors in choosing a restaurant (Heung, Wong, & Hailin, 2000). To meet customers' expectation, restaurant owners and managers need to deliver high service quality in order to succeed in their business (Kotler & Keller, 2009). It is normally expected that higher restaurant quality can lead to higher satisfaction and consequently in positive behavioural intentions. The overall satisfaction may also have a significant influence on discouraging or promoting future international businesses.

Customer satisfaction is an overall attitude towards a product/service or consumer's reaction concerning the variance between expectation and what is received towards the fulfilment of some desires, needs, or goals (Hansemark & Albinsson, 2004). One of the most essential influences of customer satisfaction is on the future behavioural intentions (Ryu & Han, 2010). In the restaurant industry, satisfaction plays pivotal role since it is often considered as an indicator for predicting consumers' future behavioral intentions. The latter would translate into a more successful business in the competitive market. Many empirical researches on restaurant industry have supported the notion and importance of direct effect of customers' satisfaction on future behavioural intentions (Heung & Gu, 2012; Namin, 2017; Ryu & Han, 2010).

Consumers who are satisfied with their experience are most likely to share it with five or six people. In addition, consumers who are not satisfied are more likely to share their bad experience with ten individuals (Mohsan, Nawaz, Khan, Shaukat, & Aslam, 2011). Therefore, it is critical for the companies to realize that acquiring new customers could cost about 25% more than retaining them and dealing with their satisfaction and complains (Farber & Wycoff, 1991) succeed in a business involve becoming more competitive by means of product/service quality, new product activity, customer satisfaction, brand

image/loyalty, brand/firm relations, and manager/employee performance and capability (Aaker, 1995).

Perceived quality in the restaurant industry has been considered as one of the key determinants of customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions which mainly consists of service quality, food quality, and physical environment quality (Namkung & Jang, 2007). The literature also supported that technology and price are other features that affect customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Cobanoglu, Bilgihan, Nusair, & Berezina, 2012; Namin, 2017; Ryu, Han, & Kim, 2008). Therefore, the future growth of the restaurant industry will depend on considering all those attributes; and the ways in which these attributes influence satisfaction and behavioural intentions present a unique opportunity to succeed in the business.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The restaurant industry is faced with fierce competition especially in urban areas in Malaysia with availability of various alternatives. These alternatives range across a dynamic array of foodservice establishments including restaurants, international franchises, food courts, cafés/bars and even local hawker stalls (Lee, Lee, Chua, & Han, 2018). Urban areas, such as Klang Valley (comprised of Kuala Lumpur and its suburbs), are largely populated, and are home to Malaysian citizens, as well as immigrants and foreign workers mainly from India, Nepal, and Indonesia. This population with the arrival of international tourists resulted in growing demand for diversity in foodservice settings from a varied customer base (Malaysia Food Service HRI Sector, 2018).

Casual dining restaurant sector is rapidly growing and it is mainly dominated by chain restaurants (Dziadkowiec & Rood, 2015). Good food, moderately-priced meal compared to fine dining restaurant, and a pleasant and welcoming environment are some of the reasons of popularity of casual dining segment (Ha & Jang, 2013). In addition, the effect of western food culture specially among urban population with middle to upper incomes has resulted the opening of more casual dining restaurants such as Chili's, T.G.I Friday's, Nando's, Tony Roma's, and Manhattan Fish Market. Despite the importance of casual dining restaurant segment in Malaysia, limited studies have explored the effect of restaurant experience on customer satisfaction at casual dining restaurant sector.

Increasing competition among restaurants forces restaurant managers to focus on what customers want to be satisfied with the service quality offered. A restaurant must meet various customers' needs and wants to get repeat purchase, since attaining new customers is more challenging than keeping the existing ones. The cost of attracting a new consumer is ten times more than the cost of retaining a satisfied customer (Gitomer, 1998). It is also hard to expect consumers to be loyal forever, sticking to one restaurant among numerous alternatives with low switching costs from which they can easily select. Although,

there is no guarantee that a satisfied and happy consumer will repurchase, it is almost definite that a dissatisfied consumer will not return (Stevens, Knutson, & Patton, 1995). Moreover, customers who do not receive good quality of service will tell about their dissatisfaction of the restaurant product/service to others. Therefore, identifying the most significant attributes that lead to customer satisfaction helps the restaurants to be more competitive. Furthermore, defining the affective and important attributes of restaurants on diners' satisfaction is critical for tourism industry. On the other hand, Malaysia with its high economical dependency on tourism industry should prepare a comprehensive management on the effect of restaurant factors on customer return intentions.

Many studies identified the importance of service quality (Basri, Ahmad, Anuar, & Ismail, 2016; Ha & Jang, 2012), food quality (Namkung & Jang, 2007), physical environment (Ariffin, Bibon, & Abdullah, 2012; Heung & Gu, 2012) and price/value (Nam, Shim, & Jeong, 2017; Voon, 2012) in a dining experience and their influence on customer behavioural intentions. Despite the extensive literature in the restaurant segment, there are gaps in the analysis of customer satisfaction in terms of a comprehensive model including food quality, service quality, physical environment quality, price, and technology. The current study will fill the gap by considering aspects that were not included in previous researches and will be added to the knowledge in the field.

In addition, previous studies have applied the traditional view that attribute performance has a symmetrical correlation with satisfaction. Despite the importance of the asymmetric effect of attributes on customer satisfaction, limited studies have been conducted in the hospitality industry in general and in restaurant industry in particular, as the current literature still lacks sufficient exploration. Given the misconception of satisfaction, further studies are essential in gathering more conclusive findings in order to characterize the relationship between satisfaction and restaurant attributes.

Customer satisfaction has been proven to have a significant effect on customer loyalty, which increases organizational profits (Kandampully, Zhang, & Bilgihan, 2015). As a result, restaurant managers have changed their focus to the characteristics of customer behavioural intentions rather than just satisfaction. Customer intention is therefore more inclusive of their willingness to recommend and return in comparison with satisfaction alone in a restaurant setting. If customer satisfaction and behavioural intention, especially in restaurant choice, are not examined, it is difficult to know the fundamental reason why customers choose to dine in a particular restaurant. Therefore, the current study seeks a systematic and comprehensive examination of diners' experiences to evaluate customer's satisfaction and behavioural intentions in casual dining restaurants in Malaysia.

1.3 Research Objectives

Considering the relationships between restaurant attributes, customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions, the overall objective of this research is to investigate the key features influencing customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions in the casual dining restaurant segment. To fulfil the aim of the research, the following specific objectives are formulated:

1. To examine the effects of service quality, food quality, physical environment, price, and technology on customer satisfaction at casual dining restaurant.
2. To assess the impact of these restaurant attributes along with the theory of planned behaviour constructs on behavioural intentions.
3. To determine the effect of customer satisfactions on the behavioural intentions.
4. To develop a causal and comprehensive model of customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).
5. To identify most influential factors to enhance the customer satisfaction based on IPA model.

1.4 Research Contributions

This research contributed both academically and practically. It pursues making an original contribution to the body of literature by evaluating the relationship among restaurant qualities, satisfaction and behavioural intentions, especially in the full-service restaurant sector in Malaysia. This study will provide a deeper understanding of the quality features that influence customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. These features will be used to predict the likelihood of returning and word-of-mouth recommendations. The results of this study would be useful to hospitality management students and educators considering this field as a profession as well as academics interested in conducting further studies. The information obtained in this study regarding the factors affecting customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions will be added to service marketing literature.

Since the existence of many satisfaction measurement frameworks is causing confusion between practitioners; this study aims to provide a reliable and efficient cognitive model for determining the causal relationship among independent and dependent variables to identify factors contributing to the success or failure of a dining outlet. Those features can be applied by the managers to reposition the restaurant in order to improve the restaurant image in the respective target market. This knowledge could, in turn, help the decision makers at casual dining restaurants to recognize which aspects most influence customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Recognizing those determinants is essential for strategic planning and allocating limited resources and also for tactical operations of each restaurant, as it will guide managers to focus on areas of customers' concerns.

This study also offers managerial implications for practitioners. Restaurant

managers, customers and policy makers must now deal with the questions of how, where, and on what the money is to be spent; therefore, this study would assist both the public sector and restaurant managers to strengthen the efficiency of restaurant product and service development, and to provide customers with satisfaction and memorable dining experience.

The findings of this study offer information on the significant factors leading to diners' behavioural intentions. The specific items explaining customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions also provide practical information for restaurant managers to develop more effective marketing strategies. It is essential for restaurateurs to identify which factors influence customers' behavioural intentions to maintain existing customers because it has been proved that loyal customers are more likely to repurchase, spread positive WOM and reduce operating costs, which lead to increase company's profits (Oliver, 1999; Pullman & Gross, 2003).

This research not only contributes considerably to existing academic knowledge, but also contributes substantially to tourism industry. The results of this study may be helpful for Malaysian officials, specifically those in the Ministry of Tourism. The policies of the Malaysian government are to encourage the growth of the tourism industry, since Malaysia is known as a popular destination for tourists. Restaurants are seen as an important part of the travel experience for tourists and foreign travelers because food serves as both entertainment and cultural activity. When tourists are not satisfied with their dining experience, that dissatisfaction influences their attitudes towards the restaurant and accordingly, makes them unwilling to revisit the destination (Josiam & Monteiro, 2004; Nam & Lee, 2011). Therefore, it is hoped that the findings would provide valuable insights into the hospitality and tourism industry in terms of keeping and delivering on reliable service promises and increasing customer satisfaction and return intention with the service quality offered by restaurants.

1.5 Definition of Terms

The following section defines terminology used in this study. These definitions ensure the readers understand the concept of the unique terms in the current research.

Customer Satisfaction: The customers' level of feeling towards products and services in accordance with their expectations (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2002). In other words, it is the sum of total satisfaction made up of all individual characteristics of the products and services involved in the dining experience (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1994).

Behavioural intention: Individual's beliefs about what he/she intends to perform in a particular situation (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). It refers to the likelihood of

performing the target behaviour and represents the decisions to behave in a specific way which affect an individual's tendency towards an action (Sheeran, 2002).

Restaurant: It is a suitable establishment that offers food, beverages, light refreshments, and services to the customers in return for money (Ninemeier, 2000).

Fast food or quick service restaurant: The fast food restaurant sector provides convenient and quick food, self-service, reasonable price, and quick turnaround. They may provide finger foods with do-it-yourself table clearing and fast-moving queues (Taylor & Lyon, 1995).

Fast casual restaurant: Fast casual restaurant is a restaurant segment between quick service and casual dining restaurants, offering better quality of food than fast food and quicker service than casual dining outlet with an environment similar to casual dining restaurants (Ryu, Han, & Jang, 2010). The food price at the fast-casual restaurant segment is higher than the quick service restaurant.

Casual dining restaurant: Casual dining restaurant refers to a setting that offers moderately priced meals in a casual atmosphere. It is one of the most common types in the restaurant business (Rivera, DiPietro, Murphy, & Muller, 2008). This type of restaurant does not typically take reservations and does not use tablecloths. It focuses on taking orders quickly and providing fast service. It also serves meals that are cheaper than fine dining restaurants (Arora, 2012). Casual dining market sector comprises between quick service outlets and fine dining restaurants.

Fine dining restaurant: Fine dining restaurant segment provides high quality of customer service, interior design, and food to make a memorable dining experience at a high price point. Reservation availability, attentive staff and table cloths are other characteristics of the fine dining restaurant to ensure the highest level of customer satisfaction (Arora, 2012).

1.6 Thesis Organization

This thesis consists of seven chapters structured as follows:

Chapter One: This chapter provided an introduction of the study to be conducted, including the background to restaurant quality, customer satisfaction and behavioural intention, and conveying the importance of the study to the service industry, particularly the restaurant industry. It discussed the problem statement, research objectives and significance of the study to industry practitioners, scholars and policy makers. The important terms used in this

research were also defined.

Chapter Two: Chapter three is designed to review the past literature on customer satisfaction and behavioural intention and highlighting its linkage to the current study. It presents the background or setting in which the study is conducted. Therefore, the Malaysian restaurant sector as the setting of the study was discussed. It also discusses the nature of service quality and other aspect of quality affecting customer satisfaction. Finally, after reviewing the previous conceptual and empirical researches that are particularly relevant to customer satisfaction in the restaurant segment, this study addresses its intentions by identifying the prevailing gap in the literature.

Chapter Three: In this chapter, the conceptual and theoretical frameworks are discussed. It focuses on the development of the study hypotheses based on the review of the empirical and conceptual literature. The development of the model is also explained based on the observations of previous models.

Chapter Four: Chapter five is devoted to the research methodology by which the study is implemented and carried out. It focuses on the instrument development applied in the study based on the previously formulated hypotheses. It also evaluates the reliability and validity of the research and justify the use of SPSS and structural equation modeling (SEM) in the data analysis.

Chapter Five: This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the questionnaire responses for the restaurant customers. Data analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics is carried out. Next, the results of structural equation modeling (SEM) using PLS is discussed. The chapter also presents the results of the Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) using the SPSS statistical program. Finally, the discussion of the study findings and hypotheses testing is presented.

Chapter Six: The final chapter presents the summary and conclusions of this research. It discusses the implications of the study from theoretical and managerial perspectives. It also highlights the limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for future research.

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