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CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS SERVICE QUALITY IN FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS AT COIMBATORE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores consumer perceptions towards fast food restaurants in Coimbatore, focusing on the key factors price, ambience, quality of food, and service. Price is a significant determinant in consumer decision-making, often influencing the choice between different brands. Service quality, which includes factors like staff behavior, speed of service, and efficiency, contributes significantly to the overall perception of the restaurants.

KEY WORDS: *Simple Percentage Analysis, Likert Scale, Henry Garret Ranking and Chi-Square-Service Quality in Fast Food Restaurants*

INTRODUCTION

The fast food industry in India has been experiencing remarkable growth, with urban centers like Coimbatore emerging as significant hubs for this sector. As more consumers, especially from the younger demographic, increasingly opt for quick, affordable dining options, the competition in the fast food industry has grown immensely. Coimbatore, known for its industrial and educational significance, boasts a diverse population with varying preferences for food and service quality. In such a competitive landscape, understanding consumer perceptions towards service quality has become a crucial aspect for fast food businesses to thrive and sustain themselves in the market.Service quality in the fast food industry is a multi-dimensional concept that goes beyond just the food itself.

[1] Moro (2024) co-authored a study titled "Restaurant containment measures and perceived service quality: implications for future pandemics," published in *Consumer Behavior in Tourism and Hospitality***.**

[2] Larissa Maria Falcao (2017) explored to assess the nature of the regulatory services in a huge shopping center, situated in Brazil from the point of view of current specialist coops.

[3] Yusof Aminuddin et al. (2017)[4] inspected customer' assumption, insight and fulfillment with service nature of a wellness community just as examined contrasts in fulfillment with service quality dependent on sexual orientation and nationality among the customer of wellness focus in Malaysia.

[4] Farida Khan and Shalini Sharma (2016) to recognize the job of different traits liable for the choice of coordinated and disorderly retail outlets if there should be an occurrence of staple buy just as the changing job of promoting situation in drawing in and hold in the customer.

[5] Shikha Bhagat (2016) Customer satisfaction is one the most common and important aspects in any organization, particularly in fast-food industry. Due to market competition and availability of businesses, an organization needs to focus on the degree to which a customer is satisfied with its products and/or services of the organization.

[6] Aytan Mammadli (2016) examine the view of the inexpensive food industry in Sweden and tracked down that quality and taste of food are the major contributing traits in the decision of an restaurant just as neatness, clean food creation and eating regions in the midst of the purchasers.

[7] Mondurailingam et al. (2015) looked at the fulfillment of customer towards KFC and McDonalds in Jammu and determined that 22% of KFC customer and 18% of McDonald's customer are unconcerned with the nature of food though as far as the value 18% of KFC customer and 12% of McDonald's customer are not fulfilled. 24% of customer of KFC and 18% of customer of McDonald's are happy with the flavor of the food. Besides, both the food titans have given each other harsh rivalry as far as consumer loyalty**.**

[8] Thien Phuc Nguyen (2014) to explain customer' discernments and fulfillment towards versatile telecom services in fluctuated stretches of France uncovers that customer see portable organization quality, responsiveness and dependability as the three most generous properties

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OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify key factors influencing customer satisfaction in fast food restaurant
- To examine how demographics like age, gender, and income affect service quality perception
- To analyze the impact of service quality on customer loyalty and repeat visits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study will adopt a descriptive research design to explore and describe consumer perceptions of service quality in fast food restaurants. This design is appropriate as it allows for the collection of data on the variables of interest (e.g., speed of service, food quality, staff behavior, etc.) and the relationships between these factors and consumer satisfaction

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is one of the most important aspects of research. The information research methodology must be accurate and relevant. The study is based on primary data and secondary data. Questionnaire method has been used as a tool for data collection.

Secondary data means data that are already available i.e., they refer to data which has already been collected and analyzed by someone else. The secondary data for the study was collected Google scholar website and magazines

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study could explore what consumers expect from a fast food restaurant, including speed of service, food quality, price points, and customer interaction.

The Top 10 fast food restaurants in Coimbatore based on popularity KFC, Dominos, Subway, Mc.Donalds, Café coffee day, Nirulas, Pizza Hut, Burger Tree, Taco Bell and Café Retroo are choosen for the study.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

- Likert Scale
- Henry Garret Ranking
- Chi – Square

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the rapid growth of the fast food industry, many restaurants still struggle to deliver consistent service quality that meets the expectations and preferences of individual customers. Fast food outlets often focus on speed and volume and leading standardized service that ignores individual customer needs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE-1
FINDINGS OF DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

CHARACTERISTICS	CONDITION	NUMBER (%)
GENDER	Male	64 (59.8%)
	Female	43 (40.2%)
ANNUAL INCOME	Below Rs.100000	34(31.8%)
	Rs.100001 – Rs.300000	23(21.5%)
	Rs.300001 – Rs. 500000	25 (23.4%)
	Above Rs.500000	25(23.3)
MARITAL STATUS	Married	35(32.7)
	Unmarried	72(67.3%)
TYPE OF FAMILY	Nuclear	62(57.9%)
	Joint	45(42%)

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TABLE - 2
LIKERT SCALE - FACTOR FOR A FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS TO IMPROVE ITS SERVICE QUALITY

FACTORS	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Speed of service	42 (39.2)	40 (37.3)	13 (12.1)	4 (3.7)	5 (4.6)	**107**
Staff behavior	16 (14.9)	48 (44.8)	27 (25.2)	10 (9.3)	3 (2.8)	**107**
Cleanliness	23 (21.4)	27 (25.2)	39 (36.4)	12 (11.2)	3 (2.8)	**107**
Price / Value	18 (16.8)	34 (31.7)	30 (28)	17 (15.8)	5 (4.6)	**107**
Food quality	18 (16.8)	27 (25.2)	34 (31.7)	17 (15.8)	8 (7.47)	**107**

INFERENCE
Most of the respondents 44.8% agree that, "Staff Behaviour".in the fast food restaurants which influences the improvement of service.

TABLE – 3
GARRETT RANKING

FACTORS	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Rank
Order Effciency	1725	708	432	592	240	3697	**4**
Staff Professionalism	720	1140	1740	2040	320	5960	**1**
Restaurant Ambience	450	1150	1500	1250	1000	5350	**2**
Food Presentation	640	760	1040	1120	720	4280	**3**
Customization	375	500	600	675	525	2675	**5**

INFERENCE
The above table shows that garret table score value and ranking. Firstly, the garret rank is calculated by using appropriate garret ranking formula. Then based on the garret ranks the garret table value is ascertained. The garret value given in which are multiplied to record garret score in table. Finally, by adding each row the total garret score is obtained. Then the garret scored are according to their values. The first rank is given **to "Staff Professionalism"** The second rank is given to **"Restaurant Ambience"** The third rank is given to **"Food Presentation"**
The fourth rank is given to **"Order Effciency"**
The fifth rank is given to **"Order Customization"**
The Highest score is awarded to "Staff Professionalism", in fast food restaurants the least score is awarded to "Order Customization" in fast food restaurant

TABLE - 4
CHI-SQUARE TABLE SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE TYPE OF FAMILY AND POSITIVE EXPERIENCE WITH ACCURACY OF THE ORDER

OBSERVED FREQUENCY(O)	EXPECTED FREQUENCY(E)	0 - E	(0 – E)2	(O – E)2/E
22	15.7	6.3	39.69	2.528
17	23.3	-6.3	39.69	1.703
20	22.5	-2.5	6.25	0.278
36	33.5	2.5	6.25	0.187
1	4.8	-3.8	14.44	3.008
11	7.2	3.8	14.44	2.006
TOTAL				**9.710**

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INFERENCE

DEGREE OF FREEDOM:

$$V = (r – 1) (c – 1)$$
$$= (3 – 1) (2– 1)$$
$$= 2$$

Tabulated chi – square at 5 % for 2df = 6.991.

Since, the calculated value of chi – square is higher than the tabulated value of chi - square at 5% level of significance and null hypothesis is rejected.Hence the study concluded that the educational qualification has significant effect on food quality matches the price

TABLE-5

CHI-SQUARE TABLE SHOWING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE AGE AND STAFF HANDLING COMPLAINTS OR ISSUES

OBSERVED FREQUENCY (O)	EXPECTED FREQUENCY (E)	0 - E	$(0 – E)^2$	$(O – E)2/E$
2	5.6	-3.6	12.96	2.314
0	1.2	-1.2	1.44	1.200
9	8.4	0.6	0.36	0.043
6	6.0	0	0	0.000
26	21.7	4.3	18.49	0.852
12	8.4	3.6	12.96	1.543
3	1.8	1.2	1.44	0.800
12	12.6	-0.6	0.36	0.029
9	9.0	0	0	0.000
28	32.3	-4.3	18.49	0.572
14	14	0	0	0.000
TOTAL				**7.353**

INFERENCE

DEGREE OF FREEDOM:

$$V = (r – 1) (c – 1)$$
$$= (2 – 1) (5 – 1)$$
$$= 4$$

Tabulated chi – square at 5 % for 4df = 15.507 .

Since, the calculated value of chi – square is higher than the tabulated value of chi - square at 5% level of significance and null hypothesis is accepted.Hence the study concluded that the educational qualification has no significant effect on food quality matches the price.

RECOMMENDATION

- Fast food restaurants should provide regular training to staff on customer service, communication skills, and handling customer complaints politely and professionally.
- Ensuring consistent taste, freshness, and hygiene in food preparation will help build customer trust and satisfaction.
- Restaurants must prioritize cleanliness of dining areas, kitchens, and restrooms to create a pleasant dining experience..
- Launching rewards or loyalty programs can encourage repeat visits and build long-term customer relationships.
- Friendly, polite, and helpful staff contribute positively to consumer perceptions of service quality

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that service quality plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and satisfaction in fast food restaurants. Key factors such as food quality, speed of service, staff behavior, and cleanliness greatly influence the overall customer experience. Among these, friendly staff interaction and quick service were highly appreciated by most respondents.The findings also highlight that customer demographics like age, gender, and income slightly influence their expectations and satisfaction levels.

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