

IMPACT OF PERCEIVED VALUE ON WORD OF MOUTH ENDORSEMENT AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION: MEDIATING ROLE OF REPURCHASE INTENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study intends to find out the impact of perceived value on word of mouth endorsement and customer satisfaction exploring a mediating role of repurchase intentions. It is a study based on analysis of empirical data collected from 300 respondents. Correlation, regression and sobel test has been used to analyze the data. Results show a positive relationship of customer satisfaction to word of mouth endorsement and repurchase intentions. Further the repurchase intentions also mediate the relationship between customer satisfaction and word of mouth endorsement.

Keywords: *Perceived Value, Word of Mouth, Endorsement, Customer Satisfaction, Repurchase Intentions*

1. INTRODUCTION

Pakistan being a developing country is recently witnessing a huge influx of foreign franchises and specially those of fast food chains. These chains are emphasizing on customer satisfaction service quality dimensions which researchers have discovered as two core concepts of services marketing (Spreng & Mackoy, 1996). The main target market of fast food chains is mainly the young adult segment. Pakistan is a country having a huge young adult population. According to the latest census report the young adults in Pakistan are: 15–64 years about 54.9% (male 48,214,298; female 46,062,933) while those of 0–14 years are: 42% (male 33,293,428; female 31,434,314) (www.statpak.gov.pk). Therefore, about an equal number would enter the young adult segment pretty soon. Fast food chains are very well suited to this type of a country specially focusing on its main cosmopolitan and metropolitan cities. With changing trends the young adults are getting habitual to dining out more often, and as a result have a much better understanding of quality in terms of eatables, environment and service provision (Powers & Barrows, 2003:124). According to Louw (1991) and Murray & Zentner (2001) young adults are broadly within the age bracket of 18 to 30 years of age.

Consumers these days have a free will and have a lot more options for dining then ever before thus giving them the power to be more desiring and unmistakable (Andaleeb and Conway 2006: 3). As a result customers perceived value is also on the rise and it has a close relation to satisfaction of customers. (Gilbert, Goode, & Moutinho, 2004). Customer satisfaction is immensely dependant upon the perceived value of customers. As per McDaniel *et al* (2009) customer satisfaction is the appraisal of a good or service whether it has not met, met or exceeded the customer's presumptions. A pivotal factor to enhance customer satisfaction is service quality. Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985), developed The Gaps Model, which emphasizes on the importance of service quality. The model very extensively identifies quality service by differences between actual and perceived levels of service.

Coulston, (1996) suggested that as appropriate nutrition is essential to maintain health and prevent diseases similarly nutrition improvement is a prerequisite to extend the healthy stage of life. It is said that relaxed meals with the required amount of nutrients found in the meal improve health, upgrade the nutritional level and as a result improve quality of living (Weatherspoon *et al.* 2004). Weatherspoon also mentioned that if a meal time has the appropriate lighting, music, temperature and surrounding it would be entertaining and the chances of contentment are more.

In restaurant industry, physical environment plays a major role in creation of image (Ryu & Jang, 2008). As it is known that services are produced and consumed at the same time, so physical environment creates a whole impact on the consumer and hence should be designed according to the service/product (Brady & Cronin, 2001; Ryu & Jang, 2008). All factors have a positive impact on customer satisfaction but according to Mattila (2001) food quality is the most cardinal factor in quality determination in relation to satisfaction of customers and should gather the maximum focus also.

1.1 Knowledge Gap

The salience of service sector is growing steadily in terms of economic importance but it is hugely confined to western economies. Empirical research is lacking within non-western countries (specially in Pakistan) about considering the quality dimensions of services in relation to food, entertainment, nutrition within the domain of fast foods. There have been a couple of studies focusing on hospitality industries scrutiny within Pakistani scenario like that of Baig & Khan (2010) their topic was “Emotional Satisfaction and Brand Loyalty in Hospitality Industry”, Naeem et. al. (2011) focused their research on improvements needed in Pakistani hotel industry, while Afaq et. al. (2011) studied the hospitality industries’ performance improvements in relation to training of employees within expensive restaurants. What is majorly lacking is the assessment of the overall dining experience of a specific segment like that of young adults so this study would aim to uncover these areas. This study also aims to study the working model of repurchase intentions acting as a mediating variable between the customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth endorsements from among the youth of Pakistan. Hence, the gap would be filled in relation to Pakistani quick service hospitality industry.

1.2 Problem Statement

The aim of this research is to find out how satisfied the youth is with the fast food restaurants in terms of food, service, nutrition, entertainment, and physical environmental quality as well as how this satisfaction influences the repurchase intentions and word of mouth communication. Second the study was also intended to find out whether repurchase intentions mediate the relationship of customer satisfaction and word of mouth communication.

1.3 Objectives

1. To find out the either the service food, service, nutrition, entertainment, and physical environmental quality effect the perceived value of the service, and if yes how much each factor is contributing in that value
2. To find out how much, if any, perceived value impact on customer satisfaction
3. To find out how much, if any, customer satisfaction contribute in the development of the repurchase intentions and positive word of mouth communication
4. To find out if the repurchase intention mediate the relationship of the customer satisfaction and positive word of mouth communication
5. Proposing a working model for quality and perceived value in terms of word of mouth endorsement.

1.4 Applied Aspects

The Manager of the Fast Food Restaurant in Pakistan could be benefited by the results of this study as they are guiding them on number of factors where they should focus to increase the customer satisfaction that leads to repurchase intentions and increase word of mouth communications. The study, expectedly, guide them how to strategize different part of the services to create more impact.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Food, service, nutrition, entertainment, and physical environmental quality effect the perceived value of the service

Zeithmal (1988) defined customer value as “the customer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given”. The trend of dining out within Pakistan is changing specially in terms of the youth. Earlier it was a family affair but now with the advent of fast foods mostly the young adults are found with friends at such places. Knutson and Patton (1993) found that companionship is one of the main factors of dining out and food quality as the major reason for selection of restaurants. Yuksel and Yuksel’s (2002) are quoted to have said, “Customers are likely to spend their time and money in an establishment where the service environment prompts a feeling of pleasure.”

Food quality is directly correlated with customer satisfaction (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994). It is considered the core element to fulfil customers needs (Peri, 2006). Presentation, health options, taste, freshness, variety, and temperature are some of the factors which relatively coincide with food quality (Namkung and Jang 2007). Generally it is a cumbersome job to weigh your calories intake at restaurants. It was recommended in Human

Services (2003) that for food eaten away from home more nutritional information should be disclosed as some former studies noted that choice of food was changed after viewing the nutritional information section (Harris & Blisard, 2002).

Entertainment is a major characteristic within the satisfaction of consumers involved in getting services (Namkung and Jang 2007), and considering the young adults segment of the population entertainment plays a very pivotal role as if entertainment is not provided than there is no satisfaction.

Services are majorly intangible therefore, the physical environment has an immense impact on satisfaction levels (Ryu & Jang, 2008). Bitner (1992) focused on the role of physical environment as major judgmental factors for services and hence gave the name of 'SERVICESCAPE' to all the tangible or visible factors essential for enhancing performance of the organization/ service. Service quality is best evaluated by the customer and its excellence should be the focal point for all service producers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). However, the exact definition of the term service quality is situation and person specific. In fierce challenges of today, restaurateurs who provide quality service and value have a dominance over those that do not (Ryu & Han, 2010). Stevens, Knutson, and Patton (1995) have applied SERVQUAL to the restaurant industry. They developed the DINESERV instrument based on SERVQUAL instrument to measure overall service quality perceived from customers of restaurants.

Perceptions are a very critical element while studying Marketing literature (O'Neill, 2000), this is often translated as the customers direct interaction with a product (good or service) (Zeithaml, 1987). Therefore, before interaction with a service within the fast food context a consumer would have positive expectations hence, the first hypothesis would be:

H1: Perceived value is signified by:

- a. Positive influence of FOH service quality
- b. Positive influence of food quality
- c. Positive influence of nutrition quality
- d. Positive influence of entertainment quality and
- e. Positive influence of physical environment quality

2.2 Customer Satisfaction, Repurchase Intention and Word of mouth Communication

When all the factors of quality are satisfied like service, food, entertainment etc this gives rise to contentment of the consumer or customer satisfaction (Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky, 1996). It is conceptualized as the result of multiple constructs (Yi, 1990). Different authors postulate that satisfied consumers either become loyal customers or repeatedly purchase services or become endorsers of the service with positive word of mouth (park 2004). According to jordan and prinsloo, 2001 one satisfied customer brings in three other customers. Oh (1999) pointed out that perceived quality, value, customer satisfaction, repurchase intention, and word of mouth endorsement are positively correlated with each other.

Customer satisfaction is highly dependant upon the positive perceptions of quality by the consumers. Although this relation is thought to be neither very simple and nor very straightforward (Taylor & Baker, 1994). There are two theories about this relationship, first is of PZB (1998) that due to customer satisfaction positive perception in relation to service quality is born. As per Cronin and Taylor (1992) perceived value proceeds customer satisfaction. So the second hypothesis is:

H2: Percieved value has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction

The research of Cronin, Brady and Hult (2000) behavioral intentions have a relationship direct in nature towards customer satisfaction and quality of service and the nature of relation can be mediating, consequent or antecedent. Restaurant attributes like food quality and themes are essential in gaining customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction directly influences the intent of customers to return (Weiss 2003). So the next hypothesis would be:

H3: Customer Satisfaction has a positive relation with repurchase intentions.

In a latest academic study which is mentioned in Struebing's (1996) research, three factors can increase revenue streams and they are, attracting new customers through positive word of mouth endorsements, percentage increase in retained customers and increasing the amount spent or products consumed by loyal customers.

Therefore it can be said that satisfied customers promote the product and their regular visits also help to endorse the service to new customers. The last hypothesis being:

H4: Repurchase intention acts as a mediating variable between customer satisfaction and positive Word of Mouth Endorsement.

The relationship of variables as hypothesized is depicted in the figure below. (Fig. 1)

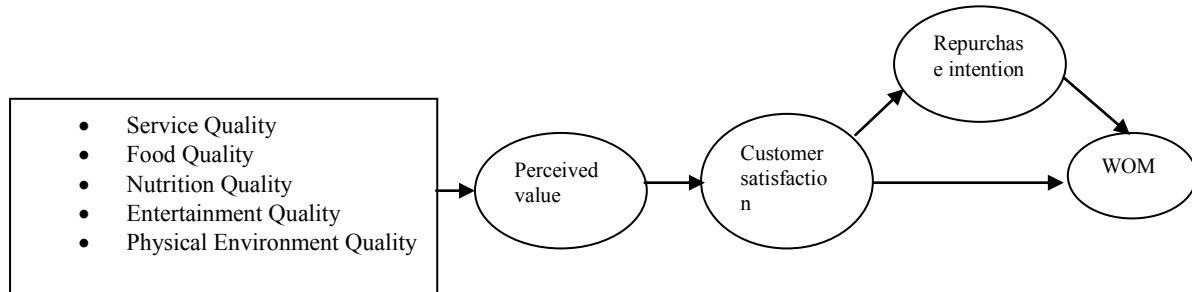


Figure 1. The hypothesized relationship/interaction of the variables.

Source: Researchers’ own processing.

3. METHODOLOGY

For the casual cross sectional study the universe was taken as all the young adults who are residents of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, visiting fast food restaurants and falling within the age of 18 to 30 years as the same age group was defined as adult by Murray & Zentner (2001).

3.1 Sampling procedure

A convenience sampling was conducted from the young adults who have visited the fast food chains like McDonald’s, KFC, Hardees, Subway or Pizza hut. The sample size was 300.

3.2 Tool for data collection

Self administered questionnaire comprising three sections was adopted with minor modifications for Pakistani population. SERVQUAL questionnaire was used after review (Stevens, Knutson, and Patton, 1995; Lee and Hing, 1995; Heung, Wong and Qu, 2000; Johns and Tyas, 1996; Fu and Parks, 2001; Lee, Kim, Hemmington and Yun, 2004). Johns and Tyas, (1996), Meyer,(1997) and Fu and Parks, (2001) research was reviewed for food and nutrition quality part of the questionnaire and the same were reviewed for perceived value. For entertainment quality the work of Williams (1996) and Brumback (2004) was reviewed and questions adopted with modifications for Pakistan.

3.3 Reliability for the instrument

For the analysis of data SPSS version 16 was used. The value of Alpha Reliability for the instrument used came out more than .7 thus showing a strong internal consistency for the tool used.

Table 3. 1: Reliability of Variables

Factor	Cronbach’s Alpha
Service Quality	0.82
Food Quality	0.86
Nutrition Quality	0.78
Entertainment Quality	0.88
Physical Environment Quality	0.92
Perceived Value	0.94
Customer Satisfaction	0.89
Repurchase Intentions	0.76
Word of Mouth Endorsements	0.83

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Survey

As the survey was conducted from young adults so all the respondents were between the age range of 18 to 30 years of age. Out of the sample size of 300, 132 (44%) were male while 168 (56%) were females. The respondents were located within Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

To check the first hypothesis correlation and regression was applied. The results are given below
 Table 4.1: Correlation of Perceived Value and Quality Dimensions

		Correlations					
		SQ	FoodQ	NQ	EntrQ	PE	PV
SQ	Pearson Correlation	1	.477**	.219**	.239**	.501**	.734**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300
FoodQ	Pearson Correlation	.477**	1	.311**	.252**	.429**	.734**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300
NQ	Pearson Correlation	.219**	.311**	1	.225**	.081	.590**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.161	.000
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300
EntrQ	Pearson Correlation	.239**	.252**	.225**	1	.367**	.540**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300
PE	Pearson Correlation	.501**	.429**	.081	.367**	1	.695**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.161	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300
PV	Pearson Correlation	.734**	.734**	.590**	.540**	.695**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300	300	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data

Table 4.2: Regression Analysis of quality dimensions and Perceived Value
 Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.954	.752		1.269	.206
	SQ	1.004	.033	.313	30.110	.000
	FoodQ	1.214	.043	.287	28.003	.000
	NQ	1.210	.030	.363	39.910	.000
	EntrQ	1.150	.054	.196	21.135	.000
	PE	1.058	.036	.314	29.787	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PV

Source: Field Data

Hypothesis 1: The first Hypothesis was that Perceived value is signified by Positive influence of FOH service quality, Positive influence of food quality, Positive influence of nutrition quality, Positive influence of entertainment quality and Positive influence of physical environment quality. Correlation in table 4.1 showed that all quality dimensions have a strong association with the perceived value. The regression analysis shown in Table 4.2 also proves the first hypothesis to be accepted as standard error is very low between 3 to 5% and strong relation of each quality dimension to perceived value. Moreover B value shows an influence of 31% of service quality, 28% of food quality of 36% of nutrition quality, 20% of Positive influence of entertainment quality and 31% influence of physical environment quality on perceived value. The acceptance of hypothesis is well in line with the findings of Bitner & Hubbert (1994), Ryu & Jang, (2008), Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, (1988), Namkung and Jang (2007) who identified the importance of the all dimensions in discussion on perceived value.

Table 4.3: Correlation of Perceived Value and Customer Satisfaction
Correlations

		CS	PV
CS	Pearson Correlation	1	.985**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	300	300
PV	Pearson Correlation	.985**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data

Table 4.4: Regression coefficients of PV and CS
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.302	1.016		2.265	.024
	PV	1.128	.012	.985	97.607	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CS

Source: Field Data

Hypothesis 2: The second hypothesis was that Perceived value has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. Correlation Analysis in Table 4.3 shows a very strong relation between Perceived Value and Customer Satisfaction. Regression Analysis in Table 4.4 showed a positive strong influence of perceived value on customer Satisfaction making second hypothesis accepted. The findings are in line with the research of Cronin and Taylor (1992).

Table 4.5: Correlation of Customer Satisfaction, Repurchase Intentions and Word of Mouth Communication
Correlations

		CS	RI	WOM
CS	Pearson Correlation	1	.986**	.991**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	300	300	300
RI	Pearson Correlation	.986**	1	.996**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	300	300	300
WOM	Pearson Correlation	.991**	.996**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	300	300	300

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Data

Table 4.6: Regression of Customer Satisfaction and Repurchase Intentions
Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2.049	1.001		-2.047	.042
	RI	.900	.009	.986	103.421	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CS

Source: Field Data

Table 4.7: Regression of Customer Satisfaction and Word of Mouth
Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	11.136	1.752		6.357	.000
CS	2.161	.017	.991	125.194	.000

a. Dependent Variable: WOM

Source: Field Data

Hypothesis 3: Third hypothesis was Customer Satisfaction has a positive relation with repurchase intentions and word of mouth communication. Table 4.5 showed a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intentions and customer satisfaction and word of mouth communication of young adults at fast foods. Regression analysis (table 4.6 and table 4.7) also showed a significant influence of customer satisfaction on repurchase intentions and word of mouth communication with the Beta value of .986 and .99. It is apparent from the results that once a young adult is satisfied as his or her perceptions are met or exceeded the chances of becoming a frequent visitor to the location is ensured as well as he/she recommends more to come and purchase from the seller. The findings are in line with the research of Weiss, (2003).

Table 4.8: Sobel, Aroian and Goodman Test for mediation

Test Type	Test Statistic	Standard Error	p-Value
Sobel Test	82.3496541	0.02836734	0
Aroian Test	82.3481754	0.02836785	0
Goodman Test	82.35113288	0.02836684	0

Source: Field Data

Hypothesis 4: The fourth hypothesis was that Repurchase intention acts as a mediating variable between customer satisfaction and positive Word of Mouth Endorsement. For checking the mediating role the Sobel test was conducted after devising the regression models of customer satisfaction and word of mouth endorsements and repurchase intentions and word of mouth endorsements. The Sobel Test, The Aroian Test and The Goodman Test all three generated a positive result. The results obtained are shown in Table 12. The test statistic for all three tests is about 82 showing about 82% relation of Repurchase Intention as a mediator for customer satisfaction and WOM endorsements. Furthermore the p-value of 0 in all three tests is well within range that is less than .05. Hence, proved that the model stands true and mediation exists.

4.3 Conclusion

The following conclusions have been drawn from the research:

1. There is a strong trend of dining out in young adults both male and female and the amount spent in fast foods is also on the rise.
2. The model drew up was proved true hence, service quality, food quality, nutrition quality, entertainment quality and physical environment quality are the main ingredients of perceived value. Customers perception if met leads to customer satisfaction which in turn leads to repurchase and WOM endorsements. Furthermore, the repurchase intentions also mediate the customer satisfaction and WOM part of the model.
3. Food, service and physical environment have major impact on satisfaction levels of customers.
4. Lastly, WOM is generated on the basis of satisfaction but accelerated even more due to relationship building with the organization due to loyalty.

4.4 Recommendations

Young adults were found to be frequent dinners in fast food chains. Therefore, the findings of the research would be of particular help to the fast food chain's management for their strategic planning. For future researches different restaurant sectors can be compared for designing a perfect model for differentiation. Furthermore, a comparison of different age segments like young adults, adults and senior citizens could also be conducted to design appropriate strategies for each segment.

4.5 Limitations

1. The survey was conducted from the young adults mostly at their university campuses where as if conducted right after the meal at their favorite fast food chain would have generated better results.

2. If all three types of restaurants could be compared that is quick service, casual dining and fine dining, results would be better.
3. A limited sample just from Rawalpindi and Islamabad is also a limitation of the study.

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