



The antecedents and consequence of consumer attitudes toward restaurant brands: A comparative study between casual and fine dining restaurants

Jinsoo Hwang^{a,*}, Chihyung Ok^{b,1}

^a Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics, 150 Justin Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1404, USA

^b Department of Hospitality Management and Dietetics, 148C Justin Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506-1404, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Physical environmental quality
Interactional quality
Outcome quality
Utilitarian attitude
Hedonic attitude
Brand preference

ABSTRACT

This study examined a theoretical model examining interrelationships among three service qualities (i.e., physical environment quality, interactional quality, and outcome quality). In addition, this study investigated the effects of three service qualities on utilitarian and hedonic attitudes toward restaurant brands and the mediating effects of such attitudes in forming brand preference in full-service restaurants. To further understand unique differences, this study conducted a multi-group analysis comparing the proposed relationships between 318 casual and 303 fine dining patrons (621 full-service restaurant patrons in total). In the full-service restaurant setting, the results of data analysis indicated significant interrelationships among three service qualities. Physical environment quality explained a large amount of variation in both interactional and outcome quality. In turn, interactional quality had a positive effect on outcome quality. Physical environment quality had a significant effect only on hedonic attitude. Interactional and outcome qualities had significant effects on utilitarian and hedonic attitudes toward restaurant brands. Finally, utilitarian and hedonic attitudes toward restaurant brands enhanced brand preference. When separately analyzed, the effect of physical environment quality on hedonic attitude became not significant in casual dining segment. Further, the effect of outcome quality on utilitarian attitude became not significant in fine dining segment. Both theoretical and managerial implications of the results are discussed.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Hospitality service is complex, so restaurateurs should focus not only on food quality but also other elements such as physical environment and employee service to attract more customers, serve them better, and keep them returning (Kivela, 1997; Reuland et al., 1985). The level of performance in serving customers has been the barometer of customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Brady and Cronin, 2001), so measuring service quality by comparing customers' expectations with perceived performance has received much attention from both marketers and researchers.

To measure service quality specifically in the hospitality industry, previous studies have developed diverse measurements like LODGSERV (Knutson et al., 1990), DINESERV (Stevens et al., 1995), TANGSERV (Raajpoot, 2002), and DINESCAPE (Ryu and Jang, 2008). Such scales commonly stress the importance of physical environment quality and interactional quality. Outcome quality, the result

of a service transaction (Grönroos, 1984, 1990), is evaluated after going through process quality. Food quality is the core of the overall dining experience (Auty, 1992; Kivela et al., 1999; Raajpoot, 2002). Since the level of performance in those three service qualities significantly affects a business's ability to sustain its competitive status (Andaleeb and Caskey, 2007; Andaleeb and Conway, 2006), existing studies have focused on how to enhance service quality as evaluated by customers. Further, many studies empirically confirmed the relationship of these dimensions with core outcome variables like customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. For example, Han and Ryu (2009) showed that a high quality physical environment (using décor and artifacts, spatial layout, and ambient conditions) creates more customer satisfaction. Kim et al. (2010) noted that interactional quality affects customer satisfaction. In addition, Namkung and Jang (2007) examined the role of food quality, especially presentation, menu variety, taste, freshness, and temperature, in predicting customer satisfaction.

However, there has been little research, focusing on the interrelationships among all three of these service qualities. Customers may first perceive a poor quality physical environment, which could then negatively affect their perception of interactional and outcome qualities. In other words, if the physical environment is not satisfactory, customers may not feel fully satisfied even if restaurants

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 785 532 2213; fax: +1 785 532 5522.

E-mail addresses: jinsoohwang@hanmail.net (J. Hwang), cok0307@ksu.edu (C. Ok).

¹ Tel.: +1 785 532 2207; fax: +1 785 532 5522.

provide great service and food. The results of this study should enable researchers and restaurateurs to better understand how these three service qualities interact.

In addition to such performance qualities, brands are important to customers. According to Zhou and Wong (2008), some consumers focus more on brand than product quality. Customers do not consider all attributes when dining out, but they select a restaurant based on a broad attitude toward a particular restaurant brand. Thus, understanding how consumer attitude toward a brand (i.e., the comprehensive evaluation of a brand) is formed is critical. Voss et al. (2003) introduced utilitarian and hedonic components of attitude to better understand customers' consumption experience. This multidimensional understanding of consumer attitude has special implications for the restaurant industry. People dine out to satisfy their hunger (utilitarian aspect), but also for other purposes, like fun and playfulness (hedonic aspect). Therefore, understanding of how dining experiences affect consumers' utilitarian and hedonic attitude toward a brand is critical in designing and developing product positioning and increasing satisfaction and behavioral intention.

Because brand preference is indispensable in highly competitive businesses, practitioners and researchers have long spotlighted the concept. From a business standpoint, the challenge is that customers could change their favorite brands as they are exposed to variety of attractive brands (Mathur et al., 2003). That is, customers tend to seek better brands of products or services, so their brand preference can change. For businesses to reduce that risk, they should understand what affects brand preference and how to build brand preference. Despite the importance of brand preference, few studies have explored its importance in the restaurant industry.

Therefore, the purposes of this study were to (1) investigate the interrelationships among three service qualities including physical environment, interactional, and outcome qualities, (2) examine the effects of three service qualities on consumer attitudes including utilitarian and hedonic attitudes toward restaurant brands, and (3) explore the influences of consumer attitudes toward restaurant brands on brand preference. Further, knowing that diners may visit restaurants with various needs for different restaurants and consequently evaluate performance differently, this study conducted a multi-group analysis of structural parameter invariance test between casual and fine dining restaurants.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Antecedents of utilitarian and hedonic attitudes

2.1.1. Physical environment quality

Physical environment is the man-made, physical surroundings, not the natural or social environment (Bitner, 1992). Since Kotler (1973) first introduced the concept of atmospherics (also known as physical environment or servicescape), many scholars have studied the role of the physical environment during consumption. Mehrabian and Russell (1974) first proposed a theoretical model, called M–R environmental psychology model, explaining the effect of environment on human behavior. The M–R model suggests that as environments induce customers' emotions including pleasure (e.g., good or happy), arousal (e.g., excited or active) and dominance (e.g., control or importance), customers change their behaviors. Further studies showed that the physical environment is critical to a patron's satisfaction and behavior in a restaurant (e.g., Baker et al., 1994; Bitner, 1990; Kim and Moon, 2009; Kivela et al., 2000; Robson, 1999). Of the dimensions of physical environment that scholars have suggested, four are widely accepted: ambient conditions (e.g., Kim and Moon, 2009; Lucas, 2003), facility aesthetics (e.g., Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996; Ryu and Jang, 2007),

spatial layout (e.g., Bitner, 1992; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994), and seating comfort (e.g., Bitner, 1992; Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996).

Ambient conditions refer to intangible aspects affecting individual responses to the environment (Bitner, 1992). They include background characteristics of the physical environment: lighting level, temperature, aroma, and background music. Lighting is important to ambient conditions in a restaurant. For example, restaurant owners use subdued, warm, and comfortable lighting to enhance the image of full-service restaurants, whereas bright lighting is often used in quick service restaurants (Ryu and Jang, 2007). In addition, temperature is important to comfortable ambient conditions (Bell and Baron, 1977; Sundstrom and Sundstrom, 1986). Aroma can also significantly affect a customer's mood and emotion (Bone and Ellen, 1999). Finally, music helps enhance ambient conditions. Music tempo affects customer perceptions while shopping in stores (Mattila and Wirtz, 2001), and Hui et al. (1997) suggested that music can reduce issues with waiting.

Customers are also attracted by eye-catching aesthetics in a restaurant. Facility aesthetics include architectural design, décor, and interior design, which customers view and evaluate (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1994) and contribute to the attractiveness of the physical environment. Spatial layout refers to "the ways in which machinery, equipment, and furnishings are arranged, the size and shape of those items, and the spatial relationships among them" (Bitner, 1992, p. 66). A well-ordered spatial layout makes customers more likely to feel comfortable (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996), and customers perceive convenience and safety when they move around in a restaurant (Bitner, 1992).

Seating comfort refers to the level of physical comfort derived from the seating quality (Lam et al., 2011); it is determined by the physical seat itself as well as the space between the seats (Wakefield and Blodgett, 1996). Lam et al. (2011) found that seating comfort in a casino setting is significant for customers who stay longer at a facility. Bitner (1992) also suggested that how long customers stay in a restaurant depends on the degree of seating comfort.

2.1.2. Interactional quality

Delivering superior interactional quality enhances success in the restaurant business (Oh, 2000). Interactional quality refers to the customer's perception on employee service during service delivery, characterized by employees' attitude, behavior and expertise (Brady and Cronin, 2001). Although many researchers have tried to measure interactional quality with multi-dimensional conceptualizations, no consensus on what those dimensions are has been reached (Brady and Cronin, 2001). Among the diverse measurements, the most well known and most heavily used is SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The SERVQUAL instrument measures consumers' expectations and perceptions on five distinct dimensions: assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence), empathy (caring, individualized attention), reliability (performing the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (willingness to help customers and provide prompt service), and tangibles (physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel). Previous studies have demonstrated positive relationships between the SERVQUAL dimensions and outcome variables. For example, Fu and Parks (2001) showed that the SERVQUAL dimensions were found to be important predictors of the intention to return and recommend. Zhou et al. (2002) revealed positive relationships between the SERVQUAL dimensions and customer satisfaction. In addition, Kayaman and Arasli (2007) found that the SERVQUAL dimensions have been found to be strongly related to brand loyalty and brand image. Carrying this step further, Stevens et al. (1995) altered SERVQUAL, designing DINESERV to assess specifically the quality of service in restaurants. In the DINESERV study, the authors used

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات