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Retail Café Facilities: Food Quality, Price and Ambience Towards Customer Satisfaction Using Mixed Method Approach

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ABSTRACT

High-education students require ample facilities in their learning experience. Food and services provide an amount of support to the student's learning process. While it is important to offer the quality of food and services that support and retain students, much effort could provide an ambience to a satisfying life during learning experiences. This study emphasizes the investigation of food service quality in the cafeteria of Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah. This cross-sectional study utilizes a quantitative method and aims at recognizing the level of variables. This preliminary study employed an online distributed questionnaire and collected 213 respondents as pilot respondents. This pilot test is administered to test the reliability coefficients and some other feasible challenges in collecting the data. This study is required to check the quality of the adapted instruments and foresee some possible variables determinant to young customer satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Facilities remains among the most important parts of a campus life and its quality improvement make it the winner in education competition [1]. Learning facilities is the integral part of the leaning management and environment [2]. There are various types of facilities in higher education including learning facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, buildings, sports and worships Learning facilities have a greater impact on students' motivation to strive in their learning process [3]. Facilities in higher education varies such as buildings, classrooms, sports field, worships rooms, café as well as

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online learning facilities [4]. Café or cafeteria is among the main form of food retail and suppliers in campus [5] and it has become one of the main factors to retain students to the institutions [6].

Despite functions of cafe as facilities, café in campus become centre of attraction to all. In Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah (PSIS), a Malaysian polytechnic which located in Sabak Bernam Selangor, café divided into two categories of location: café at administration (visited by students and staffs during office hours) and café 'kamsis'. Café 'kamsis' is located inside the accommodation facilities and comprises of three operators. While café admin operated by eight operators in eight retail outlets.

Although PSIS is yet to achieve the level of World Café [7], the available café is far behind to meet the definition. Product quality and price are among the factors to sustain the learning effectiveness among higher education students [8]. Food quality is among the most relevant item to customers satisfaction and lead to customer satisfaction [9] and especially remain among the main significant contributors that can retain students [6]. However, PSIS's customer response system has been getting a few comments and suggestions on the café operation and mainly focuses on the price hike, poor product quality and uncomfortable ambience [10].

Thus, this study aims at (i) to investigate the level of variables; price, food quality and ambience as well as customer satisfaction level at PSIS café (ii) to test the relationships among variables (iii) to examine the predictor to customer satisfaction at café in PSIS and (iv) to understand the customer complain towards café at PSIS.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study. The independent variables are the price, food quality and ambience of café at PSIS at the dependent variable is customer satisfaction. This study is based on Kotler Model and extended into Model of Customer Satisfaction [11].

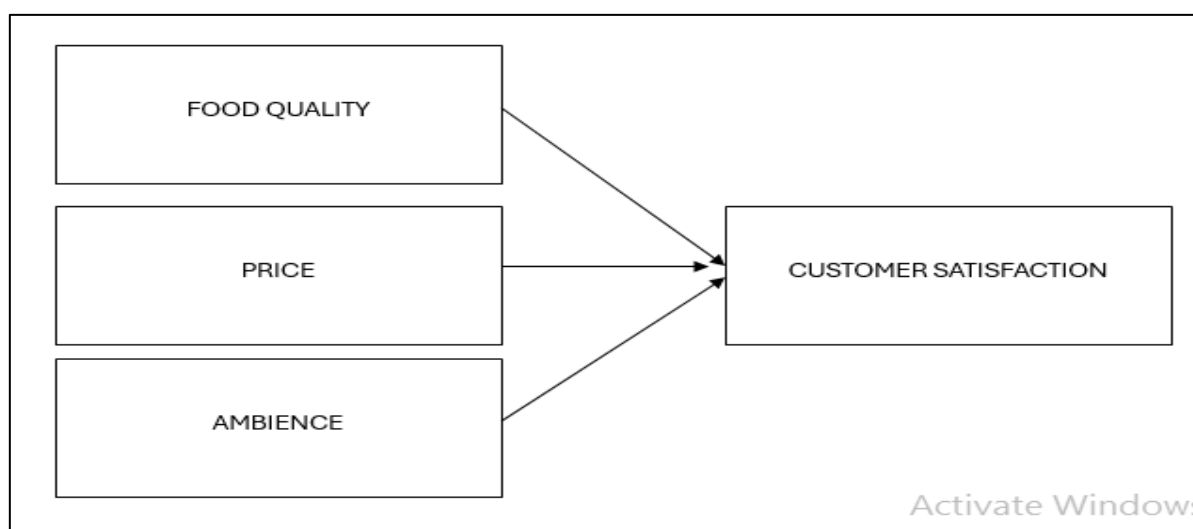


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework

1.1 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction initially has been the primary aim of a business. The Model of Customer Satisfaction (MCS) insisted on the extended benefit which is customer loyalty [11]. In this study café at PSIS is seen as one of facility that can retain the students and staffs in the campus. Currently customer satisfaction is seen as the element which can portray successfulness of a business [12]. Customer satisfaction is a *good or services that lives up to their expectations* [13]. In this case café PSIS serves all young generation students and young staff. Their expectation is young generation is changing and it will influence their purchase decisions [14]. This includes the product quality and

exterior and interior of the restaurants. Thus, the available café price, food quality and ambience will affect customer satisfaction.

1.2 Food Quality, Price and Ambience

Food quality is depend on the customer to decide [15] but most of the time packaging is the integral part which has been associated with it [16]. However for institutional food where an aging group is more associated with [17], the food quality is more diverse. But the food quality is strongly associated with its natural, safe and sustainable supply [18]. To reach sustainable and safe food, the price plays a vital role and with the rising cost, the price surged at high pace [19]. It goes the same with the physical setup and ambience. Along with the rising of experiential consumption, ambience is one of key things to focus on [20].

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This cross- sectional study started in 2023 whereby all café operators operate at full swing. This research must be carried out due to massive reports received by customer response system managed by Public Relation Officer of PSIS. Due to this local requirement of the study, this study employs mixed mode of research, quantitative and qualitative enquiry. The qualitative enquiry have been carried out to further explain the phenomena and the research approach utilized Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method [21].

The positivism element in this study stands on its fundamental questionnaires in which the questionnaires are adapted and distributed. Firstly 30 respondents are chosen as the initial pilot study. This process involved a week's process of data gathering whereby a thorough look at the recognizable issue has been determined. By running this preliminary investigation, this study sounds feasible when a lot of views and many more respondents are willing to cooperate. This is proof that the PSIS responsive system is working and alarming on the actual issues in campus. By conducting the pilot study, a few details have been taken into consideration on how to successfully gather the response.

- i) The data collection process should utilize the academic staff who are in their power enable the other respondents to give response (students)
- ii) The questionnaire should be shorter and more precise.
- iii) The data collection process was gathered during the academic calendar date.
- iv) The online procedure requires an instant response and in some cases for the interview, some token and appreciation should be given to respondents and participants.
- v) The data collection should have been gathered before the new café operators start their operation.

However, for some reason, the data collection process has to be extended. The data collection process for the previous operators should be limited to another 172 respondents and should be more selective. The questionnaire should also screen the respondents as those who have experienced the previous café operators can be the respondents. Having this situation would lead to this study to infer into the population.

Fortunately, the second approach of constructivism has been applied. Qualitative enquiry is also used to understand the phenomenon. A set of open-ended unstructured interview questions has

been utilized to further explore the situation. The interview sessions took around 20 to 40 minutes of conversation between the researchers and the participants. In this mixed approach study, the qualitative enquiry is more towards representing participants' views and perspectives rather than studying the meaning they bring or explaining human social behavior [22]. However, the approach and the data analysis used follows the thematic analysis procedures. There are five transcription which have been written from five interview sessions. After the fifth interview session, it seemed that there are limited new emerging views in which the study is believed to achieve data saturation point [23]. The details of the methodology have been summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Research Design

Bil	Methodologies	Description
1.	Methodology	Mixed Mode Research [21]
2.	Design of Study	Cross-Sectional Descriptive Research [24]
3.	Method	Questionnaire and Interview
4.	Sample	N – 3,352 TVET Students and Staffs (N- 2,993 (students) (N - 359) staffs and lecturers (Simple Random Sampling and Purposive Sampling)
5.	Credibility	Cronbach Alpha Coefficients
6.	Sample Size and Design	385 respondents (Current respondents: 213 pilot respondents)
7.	Instruments	Andaleeb (2008) and Liang et al (2009)
8.	Data Analysis	Multiple Regression, Correlation Coefficient Thematic Analysis

2.2 Sampling Method

The population of this study are both students and staff who are the customers of the retail café. The population size is shown in the above table. The sampling technique is utilizing simple random method in which the questionnaire can justify the respondents as the customers of the retail café. At this stage of study, the sampling size reaches 213 samples in which this study can be considered as a preliminary finding with the qualitative findings. The sample size of 385 samples should have been administered. However, this pilot study has been progressing and a few actions should be taken to achieve the required sample size. This study utilizes online data collection and to date this study must come to an end. This is since new operators have been newly appointed.

All polytechnic in Malaysia is practicing an open tender to their food service in which the operators could be changed accordingly. The tender document is managed by the management and all operators are subject to rules and regulations. However, despite rules and regulations of management of PSIS and the Ministry of Health, there are some procedures often misguided. However, this study focuses on the customers' perspectives and investigates the variables towards customer satisfaction.

The questionnaires has been distributed online and it has been adapted from Andaleeb [6] and Liang *et al.*, [5]. There are six sections: screening questions, food quality, price, ambience, customer satisfaction and demographic detail section respectively.

Table 2 show the Cronbach Alpha Coefficients Analysis in which internal consistency and credibility of instruments are measured. The above result shows a consistency of the construct to measure what it supposes to measure. The above table exhibited all constructs are reliable to measure the variables, two exhibited excellent value and only one exhibited only good value.

The interview questions have been using open ended questions but with minimal probing questions. This study employs a simple open-ended question, and 78 participants have participated in the focus group interview. The interview questions. The sampling method used is purposive sampling whereby the researchers interviewed the participants who are believed to be able to explain the matter [25]. The data from the qualitative enquiry is purposeful to describe on the phenomena being investigated.

Table 2
Reliability Analysis

Construct	No of items	Cronbach Alpha Coefficient	Credibility Value
Food Quality (FQ)	7	0.943	Excellent
Price (P)	4	0.783	Acceptable
Ambience and Cleanliness (AC)	9	0.912	Excellent
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	5	0.882	Good

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Demographic Detail

The findings reveal on the demographic detail as follows in Table 3. The table also show the frequency of visit to retail café and morning hour is the selected time to spend. Most respondents are female as most of female students enter higher education institution in Malaysia. 81.6% of respondents are students and the remaining are academic and non-academic staff. Therefore, more than half of them are below 30 years of age. Most respondents prefer morning to visit café in PSIS.

Table 3
Demographic Detail

Criteria	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	40	18.9
	Female	173	81.1
Status	Students	173	81.6
	Academic Staffs	14	6.7
	Non-Academic Staffs	26	8.1
	Less than 20 years	121	56.6
Age	21 to 30 years	56	26.4
	31 to 40 years	8	3.7
	41 to 50 years	26	12.3
	Above 50 years	2	1
Frequency of visit	Morning	149	71
	Afternoon	108	51.4

3.2 Research Objective One

The research objective one is to investigate the level of each variable. Table 4 explain the findings. According to Moidunny (2009) the mean score table for both food quality and customer satisfaction are at moderate level, however both price and ambience & cleanliness exhibited higher level. This finding reveals that both price and ambience & cleanliness are more likeable and preferable by the respondents as compared to food quality and customer satisfaction. This finding reveals that food quality level is important and the medium level of food quality on campus shows a significant impact

of quality of education. Research also shows that food quality have a significant impact on academic performance [26] in which a good level of food quality signal a good sign. Price and ambience exhibited high level and this two variables has been investigated and being significant to customers [27].

Table 4
Level of Variables

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level of Variables
Food quality	1.00	5.00	3.0654	0.91111	Medium
Price	1.00	5.00	3.3920	0.81811	High
Ambience and clean	1.44	5.00	3.2833	0.77232	High
Cust satisfaction	1.00	5.00	3.1108	0.82743	Medium

3.3 Research Objective Two

Research objectives two aiming at to test the relationships and correlation among variables. All variables exhibited an association between them and the positive direction shows that when variables increase, the other variables follow. Table 5 and 6 shows that all independent variables; food quality, price and ambience have a positive relationship between dependent variables; customer satisfaction. Previous study shows how important ambience to food retail and the retailers should put extra effort to improve on the ambience to achieve customer experience and satisfaction [28]. Price is also significant to customer satisfaction and pleasure [29] as well as to retain customer loyalty [30].

Table 5
Correlation Coefficient
Correlations

		Food quality	Price	Ambience & cleanliness	Customer Satisfaction
Food quality	Pearson Correlation	1	0.556**	0.674**	0.771**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	212	213	213	213
Price	Pearson Correlation	0.556**	1	0.571**	0.578**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000
	N	213	213	213	213
Ambience and clean	Pearson Correlation	0.674**	0.571**	1	0.765**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000
	N	212	213	213	213
Cust satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	0.771**	0.578**	0.765**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	
	N	213	213	213	213

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

Table 6
Relationship among variables

	Customer satisfaction	Types of association
Food quality	0.771**	POSITIVE
Price	0.578**	POSITIVE
Ambience & clean	0.765**	POSITIVE

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

Figure 2 shows the positive relationships between independent (Food quality, price and ambience and cleanliness) and dependent variables (customer satisfaction). The scatter diagram which is skewed to the right shows the positive direction of the relationship. The food quality shows the strongest association with the value of 0.771. These correlations are significant at 99% confidence level. This finding supports the relationship between variables and customer satisfaction in retail café in PSIS. Studies found an amount of product quality, price and ambience is vital to customer satisfaction in retail business [31,32].

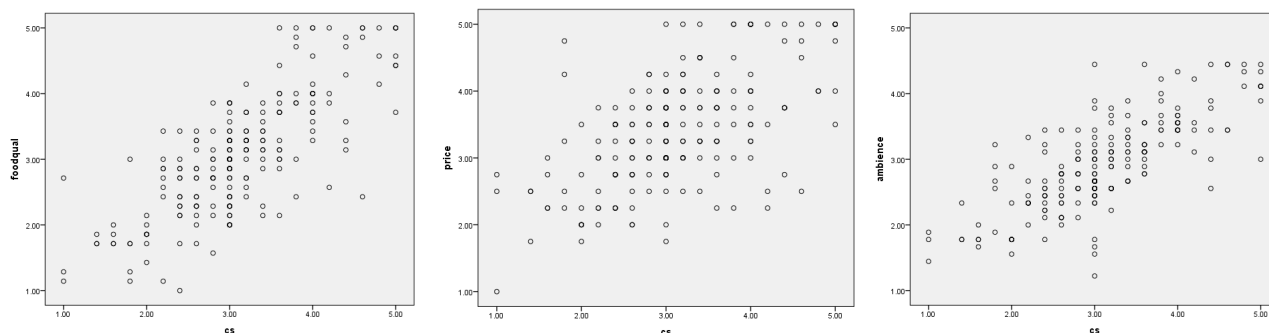


Fig. 2. Scatter Plot of Food Quality, Price and Ambience with Customer Satisfaction

3.4 Research Objective Three

Research objectives two aiming at to examine the predictor to customer satisfaction at retail café at PSIS. This objective can be achieved by running the data in SPSS.

Table 7

Regression Analysis

Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	0.845 ^a	0.714	0.710		0.44638	
a. Predictors: (Constant), ambience & clean, price, food quality						
ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	103.688	3	34.563	173.458	.000 ^b
	Residual	41.445	208	.199		
	Total	145.133	211			
a. Dependent Variable: Cust satisfaction						
b. Predictors: (Constant), ambience & clean, price, food quality						
Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.077	.149		.519	.604
	Food quality	.395	.047	.434	8.313	.000
	Price	.091	.048	.090	1.906	.058
	Ambience & clean	.460	.058	.426	8.000	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Cust satisfaction						

The finding with 71% data explained by the variables, this association shows a strong positive association with variables. However, the remaining 29% remain unexplained. The regression analysis

shows that two variables become predictors of customer satisfaction. Food quality and ambience & cleanliness is significant to customer satisfaction [32] especially in retail food of higher education institutions [5].

3.5 Research Objective Four

Based on the interview questions, there a few other this which are deem required by the participants (see Figure 3). Following of the Green Campus rules, 107 participants ask for paper straw. 64 participants also require at least stainless-steel spoons (cutlery and utensils). 63 of them are also prefer paper packaging as compared to plastic containers which is far more expensive. They also need to pack the food as they are time consuming and need to enjoy their meals at their favourite other place like hostels etc. Green campus encourages students to enjoy their meals at retail café however most participants are opted for opposite choice.

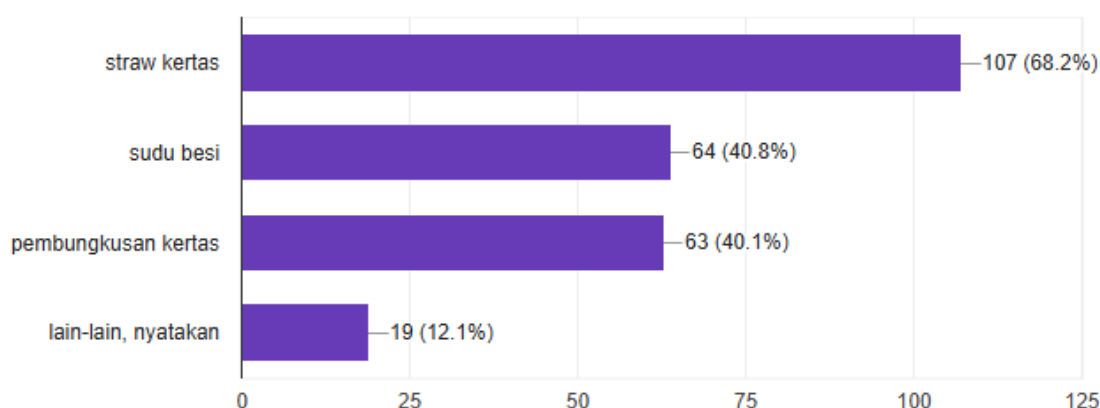


Fig. 3. Green Campus rules

Figure 4 is a thematic analysis result of the interview session. The would be one main theme which is upgrade. This upgrade process includes the menu, cleanliness and facilities. Enhancing and improving is related to upgrading customer satisfaction whereby most studies opted on upgrading the quality of its services to reach customer satisfaction [33]. The above themes derived from five participants who have been interviewed. The 30 minutes to one-hour interview has been transcribed and using Atlas ti, codes were developed.

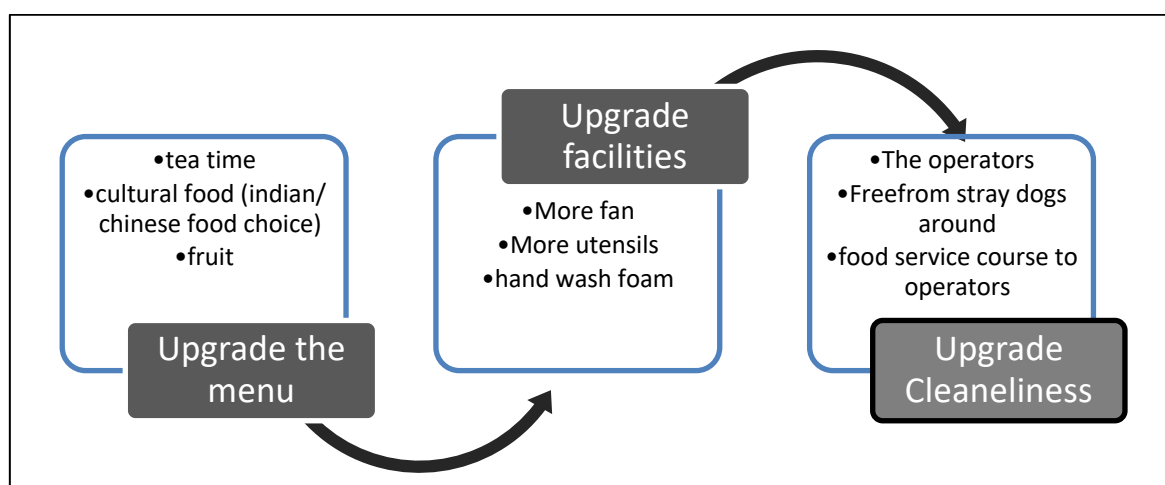


Fig. 4. Thematic analysis result of the interview session

4. Conclusions

In this study in which quantitative enquiry is employed, the online questionnaire is used along the way an interview question. This methodology is the most effective way to collect the data [34]. In conclusion various research questions have been explained. All variables have a positive relationship with customer satisfaction. This positive association of food quality and ambience shows as the predictors and determinants to customer satisfaction. This findings has long being supported by Liang at al [5] and Aye Khalid in 2016 [35]. Moreover food service remain as the factors to retain wellbeing among higher education students [36]. Recent study which is also conducted in higher education institutions reveals the similar outcomes [37]. Other retail café are also experiencing the similar influence in their operation [38] The limitation of this study is time. As for now, all operators are new and has operating the retail café with new tender and rules and regulations. Thus, this study has to be concluded as the same phenomenon has to come to an end.

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